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AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY 1987

Edited by John E. Rielly

The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations

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Introduction

This report is based on a survey conducted in October/November 1986, shortly before the end of the sixth year of the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Opinions were solicited after the summit meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in Iceland, but before the news broke in mid-November of the administration's aborted efforts to secure the release of American hostages in the Middle East through secret sales of arms to Iran. In order to verify public sentiment *after* the Iran crisis, a further survey was conducted by the Gallup Organization in mid-January 1987 on selected questions related to the crisis.

Our principal survey was conducted almost two years after the 1984 U.S. presidential election in which President Reagan was overwhelmingly re-elected. Following the collapse of the Iceland summit, many commentators on the American scene were already raising serious questions about the competence of the Reagan administration. Nevertheless, President Reagan continued to enjoy high ratings for the handling of his presidency. In the intervening months since our original data were collected, however, there has been a widespread fear that confidence in the administration's ability to conduct American foreign policy has been seriously eroded, both at home and abroad.

This is the fourth public opinion survey and analysis sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. The data on which it is based were collected exactly twelve years after the first survey, which was in autumn 1974. The second one was done in autumn 1978 and the third four years later in autumn 1982. The results of all of those surveys were summarized and published in 1975, 1979, and 1983 in publications entitled "American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy."

In the four years since the last study was published, we have witnessed the end of the economic recession that had gripped most of the OECD countries, including the United States. Our last study reflected a preoccupation with economic issues that is not evident in the results of this year's study. The resurgence of the American economy and the strengthening of the European and Japanese economies that followed, combined with the drop in the price of oil, resulted in a relative decline in importance of economic issues compared to four years ago. The decline in oil prices clearly diminished the importance of most of the OPEC countries, including the oil-producing Arab states of the Middle East.

The massive U.S. budget deficits, which were already evident by fall 1982, have continued, and one of the central preoccupations of most world leaders today is the overwhelming indebtedness of the United States, the world's wealthiest country. By autumn 1986, the U.S. had become a debtor nation. Its total debt approached $2.2 trillion, its budget deficits were at a level of $200 billion a year, and its trade deficit had reach $170 billion. The debt crisis four years ago focused principally on the precarious economies of Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico. Today the debt problem is more broadly conceived, the biggest change being the emergence of the United States as the world's biggest debtor.

At the same time, friction between the developed countries on trade issues has intensified rather than abated. Our study does not show any swing in either popular or leadership opinion in favor of protectionist sentiment during the last four years. Nevertheless, such sentiment continues to be strong, especially in the Congress. For the past six years, the Reagan administration has strongly resisted most protectionist pressures, something that many fear it will not be able to do in its weakened condition during its last two years in office.

The survey was also taken at a time when the focus of the Reagan administration had shifted from the exclusive concentration during its first three years on building up the American defense capability. The administration now combined a continued desire to improve American military might with a desire to achieve progress with the Soviet Union on arms control. The overall posture of the administration had changed from the early years. It moved from one of confrontation to one of a desire to reach at least some limited accommodation with the Soviet Union.

A new government in the Soviet Union headed by Mikhail Gorbachev displayed new vitality in governing the Soviet Union and in implementing its external policy. China continued to prosper under Party Leader Deng Xiaoping and continued its experiments with introducing market principles into the Chinese economy. Meanwhile, it continued to expand its contacts with the rest of the world and to welcome greater involvement by foreigners in China. In India a new government headed by Rajiv Gandhi was also beginning to experiment with giving a larger role to the market forces in the economy. Finally, the survey also came at a time that had seen a return to democratic government in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay in the western hemisphere and in the Philippines in Asia.

A key question in all of these surveys remains the extent to which the American public and its leaders continue to support an active role for the United States overseas. The question of the role of the United States in the world remains central to this study. In addition, we once again sought to address such issues as the relationship between domestic and foreign policy priorities, the appropriate response to the increasing diplomatic and military reach of the Soviet Union, the shift in foreign policy priorities, and the roles of various indi-

viduals and institutions in the implementation of foreign policy.

The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations commissioned the Gallup Organization to conduct this survey of both the general public and national leaders. The survey of the American public involved a stratified, systematic, national sample of 1,585 respondents representing Americans 18 years of age and older. Questions were weighted to eliminate sampling distortion with respect to age, sex, or race. The field work for that part of the study was conducted between October 30 and November 12, 1986. All of these interviews were personal, in-home interviews.

The leadership sample involved 343 interviews of individuals representing Americans in senior positions with knowledge of international affairs. We chose roughly equal proportions from the national political and governmental world, including senators and representatives (members of the Foreign Relations, Foreign Affairs and Armed Services Committees), and officials with international responsibilities from the State, Treasury, Defense, and other Departments. Participants were also drawn from the business community (chairmen and international vice-presidents of large corporations as well as leaders of business associations), the communications field (editors and publishers of major newspapers, wire service executives, television broadcasters), education (presidents and scholars from major colleges and universities), and foreign policy institutes. A smaller number of leaders was also drawn from national unions, churches, voluntary organizations, and various ethnic organizations. Interviews in the leadership survey were conducted between mid-September 1986 and mid-November. Of those interviews, 195 were by telephone, 148 in person.

In addition to the comprehensive surveys, a more limited public survey was completed by the Gallup Organization in mid-January 1987. It tested whether changes of opinion had occurred on selected questions following disclosures about the Iran arms/hostage crisis. One thousand interviews were conducted by telephone between January 14 and 18, 1987.

All interviewing, collating, and tabulating was done through the facilities of the Gallup Organization Incorporated. The design and contents and the questionnaire were prepared, after consultation with the Gallup Organization, by the editor and the following consultants: Bernard Cohen, Acting Chancellor, University of Wisconsin/Madison; Arthur Cyr, Vice President and Program Director of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations; Benjamin Page, the Frank C. Erwin, Jr., Centennial Professor in Government, University of Texas; William Schneider, Resident Fellow of the American Enterprise Institute; and Bruce L. Peterson, Research Assistant, General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center.

The figures from the completed survey were organized and compiled by the Gallup Organization. The analysis and interpretation of data presented in this report represents the joint efforts of the above group working with the editor. Once again, we have published the analysis of the data as quickly as possible after the field work was completed. The response to earlier reports confirms our judgment that the advantages of a brief but timely summary analysis outweigh the disadvantages of being able to do a comprehensive study in so short a period of time. The report should be considered in that light. The data derived from this survey will be placed on deposit with the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and the Roper Center for Public Opinion in Storrs, Connecticut. It will be available to scholars.

I want to take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to my principal collaborators: Bernard Cohen, Arthur Cyr, Benjamin Page, Bruce Peterson, and William Schneider. Special thanks are due Nora Dell, editor and director of publications of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, who once again played a critical role in every stage of the project, arranged for the design and layout of the report, and was responsible for all aspects of the publication. Special thanks are also due to Linda Crance, Lisa Heinrich, Joy Lewis, and Rhonda Sibille, who displayed skill and persistence in putting the manuscript on the word processor and seeing it through to completion.

On behalf of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, I want to express our gratitude to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and especially to President John Corbally and Executive Vice President James Furman, for financing the entire project, including the preparation, publication, and dissemination of this report.

John E. Rielly
President
The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations
February 15, 1987

Summary Findings

Throughout the 1970s, public opinion surveys sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) confirmed that the American public had developed a preoccupation with such issues as inflation, unemployment, and energy. It was inclined to withdraw from international responsibility, and harbored a feeling of military weakness and insecurity. Concern over these issues has now receded. A growing appreciation of the importance of foreign affairs is evident, combined with a desire for a larger U.S. world role. Both the American public and its leaders now believe that a favorable military balance has been restored with the Soviet Union and that the United States plays a more important role in the world. But while Americans now feel more secure, their support for increased defense spending is diminishing. Even so, most Americans are prepared to continue defense efforts at their current level.

One consequence of these perceptions and feelings is continued support for arms control and slightly increased support for certain measures associated with *detente* with the Soviet Union. But in contrast to their support for the Reagan administration's restoration of the military balance, most Americans do not support some of the more aggressive elements of its foreign policy, including its military intervention abroad, its active promotion of democracy, and its implementation of the Reagan Doctrine through covert action against communist-oriented regimes in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua.

Despite growing friction between the United States and its principal partners in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development over trade and financial issues, the public's highly favorable attitude toward Western Europe and Japan continues; in the case of Japan, somewhat surprisingly, it even improves. However, since the beginning of this decade American interest in and sympathy toward the Middle East has declined. Public willingness to commit troops in crises involving Western Europe and Japan is greater than ever, but the reluctance to commit troops in other areas of the world, including Central America, continues unchanged.

Americans remain self-interested, and the desire to protect American jobs or to secure access to energy still takes priority over such altruistic objectives as promoting democracy, defending human rights, or improving other countries' standards of living.

Large gaps continue between public and leadership attitudes and, on many issues, between the views of the public and the leadership and those expressed by Reagan administration officials. The attitudes of outside leaders and government officials are closer to one another than to the general public. But an interesting development is the emergence of notable gaps between the views of administration officials and those of labor, media, educational, and religious leaders.

These are some of the principal conclusions reached in this report by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations on American public opinion and U.S. foreign policy. This study is based on the following:

1. Personal interviews with a nationwide statistically valid random sample of 1,585 adult men and women in the U.S., carried out from late-October through mid-November by the Gallup Organization.
2. Personal and telephone interviews with a leadership sample of 343 prominent individuals in the United States from government, business, labor, academia, the mass media, religious institutions, private foreign policy organizations and special interest groups, conducted between the end of September and late-November. Those were also conducted by Gallup.
3. Because of the Iran crisis, in mid-January 1987, the Chicago Council had the Gallup Organization retest certain questions among the public sample by telephone. No significant variation occurred with respect to these questions except for a decline in the public's evaluation of Ronald Reagan's overall foreign policy and specifically his handling of terrorism.

The 1986 surveys were the fourth in a series of studies carried out by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. Previous public and leadership surveys were conducted in 1974, 1978 and 1982.

ECONOMIC CONCERNS AND SELF-INTEREST

Concern about economic issues generally, including unemployment and inflation, has declined in relative importance. A majority of Americans continue to view foreign economic policy through the lens of self-interest, but the perceived importance and interdependence of the United States economy and foreign policy declined over the past four years. While a majority of Americans still see foreign policy as having a major impact on gasoline prices, the value of the dollar abroad, and unemployment, there has been a significant drop in the level of concern. Despite the global abundance of oil supplies, access to energy supplies continues to be important and Saudi Arabia is still perceived by the public as one of the top countries in terms of vital interest to the United States. Among leaders, great concern was expressed about the federal fiscal deficit, national debt and excessive government spending. A total of 57% of those polled cited concerns related to this subject, an increase of 45% since the 1982 leadership survey.

At the same time, despite the massive trade deficit, the last four years saw a measurable decline in public support for protectionist measures as well as modest growth in support for economic aid to other nations. The leadership sample continued strongly in favor of free trade – two thirds favored eliminating tariffs on imported goods and less than 30% believed that tariffs are necessary. As has been the case consistently, the weight of public sentiment is the reverse; 53% of the public believed tariffs and trade restrictions to be necessary, only 20% favored their elimination. Over the past decade, however, the two opinion trends have moved toward one another. Leaders are slightly more protectionist and the public somewhat less so. The gap has been narrowed by 15% over the past eight years.

Another foreign policy issue with powerful economic overtones is relations with the government of South Africa. A total of 57% of the public and 79% of the leaders favored either limited or stringent economic sanctions against the South African government.

INTERNATIONALISM

Also receding is the "inward-looking" attitude that characterized the American people throughout the 1970s. The leadership group has remained virtually unanimous over the past decade that the United States should play an active world role. Among the public, those who said that the United States should play "a more active role in the world" rose from 54 percent in 1982 to 64 percent in 1986. The proportion of the population very interested in news about other countries or about U.S. relations with other countries also has shown a steady rise. Indeed, news concerning America's relations with other countries now ranks second in importance after local news, having overtaken national news.

Another striking finding of the current survey was the much greater percentage of both the public and leaders responding that the United States plays a "more important" role in the world compared with ten years ago. A total of 41% of the public felt that the United States now has a more important role, compared to 27% who selected this option in 1982; 33% of the leaders felt this way compared to only 10% in 1982. Totals of 26% of the public and 27% of the leaders believed that the United States is less important, compared to respective figures of 44% and 52% four years ago. Consistent with this trend toward greater internationalism is the marginally greater support for foreign economic and military aid on the part of the public.

AREAS OF VITAL CONCERN

As in previous surveys, both the public and the leaders saw the United States as having vital interests in many different countries. Attitudes toward particular nations have been remarkably consistent over time, especially in regard to Western Europe, Japan and our neighbors, where high perceived vital interests are registered. A high percentage of leaders and the public see a vital interest in Western Europe and the Western Hemisphere, where the United States has strong cultural, political and economic as well as security ties. In the case of Canada and Latin America, geographic proximity is also an important factor. Japan remains America's principal trading and security partner in Asia as well as an economic competitor in industrialized markets. Vital interests are also perceived in the Middle East, especially in connection with Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Leaders generally have a more inclusive view of national vital interests, although their priority areas in most cases are the same. Despite the strong disagreements between the United States and allies in Europe and Japan over the past four years, those areas along with Canada and Mexico continue to be rated most highly. Over the years, the top countries in terms of perceived vital interests by the public and leaders have generally remained the same. In 1986, those countries were for the public Great Britain, Canada, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. For opinion leaders, the top six countries in 1986 were the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, Mexico, Canada, Great Britain and the People's Republic of China. Countries whose perceived importance has increased notably since 1982 include for the public India, Italy, South Africa, South Korea and Syria; and for the leaders South Africa and South Korea.

When the public was also asked to rank countries in terms of warmth or coolness felt toward them, once again, the same countries tended to appear. The top countries here were: Canada, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, Mexico and Israel. Japan, with a "mean temperature" of 61 degrees, increased by 8 degrees over the past four years, a surprising result given the significant friction between the U.S. and Japan and the harsh criticism by American political and governmental, business and trade union leaders. The Phillippines was included for the first time in 1986 and was ranked seventh by the public at 59 degrees.

EUROPE

The high priority devoted to relations with Western Europe is evident in continued strong support by the American public as well as leaders for the military alliance with those nations and Canada, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. On a par with the levels of support of four years ago, 70% of the public and 85% of the leaders believe that we should support either increased or the same level of military commitment to NATO. Similarly, when the leadership sample was asked to choose between leaving American troops in Europe for the time being or withdrawing over the next five years and letting Europe provide for their own nuclear as well as conventional military defense, 82% of the respondents favored the status quo over the change. This is noteworthy given the continuing discussion in the United States about the advisability of our conventional military presence on the continent of Europe.

A series of additional questions posed to the leadership sample indicated no apparent shift in priorities toward Asia at the expense of Europe. When asked which area is more important to the U.S., 46% of the leaders chose Europe and 18% Asia, while 34% indicated that the two regions are of equal importance. American leaders were markedly favorable to Europe over Asia as the preferred region for post-graduate study for a son or daughter, by 69% to 15%. A related question on language preferences indicated strong support for Spanish (34%) and French (22%) over Japanese (16%) and Chinese (12%). There is evidence that among the leadership group, those in Congress were somewhat more favorable than Administration representatives to leaving troops in Europe and post-graduate study in Europe, although the sample tested here was small.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Another priority in recent years, the Middle East, has declined somewhat in perceived

importance for United States foreign policy. This was true when considering the most important foreign policy problems facing the country or the significance of oil supply/energy matters. At the same time, Israel's favorability rating among the public has increased over the past four years; and Israel and Saudi Arabia are viewed among those countries of highest vital interest to the United States. Not surprisingly, Iran was at the bottom of the thermometer for the public at 23 degrees, below the Soviet Union at 32 degrees and Syria at 34 degrees.

MILITARY ISSUES

Among the most pronounced shifts in public and leaders views during the course of the four Chicago Council on Foreign Relations surveys have been those related to defense spending. Between 1974 and 1978, support for increased defense spending grew substantially. The Council surveys combined with other polls indicate that the period of the late 1970's until early-1981 witnessed a sharp shift of American public opinion in favor of increased defense spending. In 1974, sentiment for cutting back outweighed sentiment for increasing the defense budget by as much as three to one. By 1978 there was twice as much sentiment for expanding as for reducing the defense budget. The 1982 survey indicated a reversal of this trend, with a strong consensus–a majority among the public – for maintaining current levels of defense spending rather than increasing or reducing. In 1986 sentiment among both public and leaders favors keeping the status quo and is opposed to further increases in defense spending. While this does not provide encouragement for the Reagan administration effort to expand the Pentagon budget, there is no great public sentiment for cutting back defense spending from current levels.

An important factor behind this lack of support for more defense spending is the perception of national strength, related to the view, especially on the part of the public, that the United States is now on a par with or superior to the Soviet Union in military terms. Earlier polls indicated a sense of inferiority vis-a-vis the other superpower. A major accomplishment of the Reagan administration has been the establishment of this perception within the United States.

More than in other areas, political partisanship seems to be a major factor in attitudes on defense spending. There is a strong correlation between Democratic party affiliation and support for cutting back defense spending and Republican affiliation and desire to expand defense spending. This association, already notable in 1982, has increased over the past four years. Evidence of earlier opinion polls shows that partisanship during the entire post-war period appears to correlate strongly with attitudes on defense spending. In earlier years, specifically the 1950's and early 1960's, however, the relationship was the reverse – Democrats tended to be more in favor of defense spending, Republicans much less enthusiastic.

RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

In 1986, as in 1982, both the public and leaders were concerned about the dangers of war and progress in arms control efforts with the Soviet Union. In 1986, 10% of the public sample mentioned nuclear war and related issues when asked to cite the two or three biggest problems facing the country today. By contrast, in 1978 so few respondents mentioned war or nuclear war as a principal concern that the response was not separately reported. Among leaders, 17% in 1986 cited arms control or lack of arms agreements as among the biggest problems facing the country. By contrast, only about 1% were registered in this category in 1982 and 1978. Twenty-two percent of the public cited relations with the Soviet Union as among the foreign policy problems of most concern to them, compared to 15% who cited this theme in 1982.

There continues to be strong support for arms control and related cooperative measures with the Soviet Union on the part of both the public and leaders. A total of 80% of the public and 95% of the leaders favored negotiating arms control agreements between the two superpowers; 78% of the public and 98% of the leaders are for resumption of cultural and educational exchanges; 57% of the public and 82% of the leaders want to have increased grain sales to the Soviet Union; only 37% of the public and 24% of the leaders want to restrict U.S.-Soviet trade. The only strong opposition to cooperative endeavors is in such sensitive areas of sales of advanced computers, sharing technical information with the Soviets about defending against missile attacks, and–a question asked only of the leaders – subsidizing grain sales to the Soviets. This strong support for cooperative ventures with the Soviet Union have been consistent over a long period of time. The current perception that the United States is stronger vis-a-vis the Soviet Union has to some extent reinforced the already substantial support for detente.

Regarding nuclear weapons specifically, the public and especially opinion leaders continue to believe the United States should stop building nuclear weapons only if the Soviet Union agrees to do the same. A total of 58% of the public and 79% of the leaders feel this way. There was a slight decline in support for the position that the United States should stop building nuclear weapons even if the Soviet Union does not.

A mutual freeze on nuclear weapons was also strongly supported, as in 1982; 67% of the public and 77% of the leaders would favor a mutual freeze immediately if the Soviets would agree. Only 14% of the public and 8% of the leaders felt that we should have a freeze only after the United States builds up more nuclear weapons.

INTERVENTIONISM

There was a continuation of the long-term trend of gradually increased public willingness to commit United States troops in selected circumstances overseas. A majority of the public and leaders would be willing to send United States troops if either Japan or Western Europe were invaded by the Soviet Union. On the other hand, there is a reluctance to commit American troops in other circumstances. Majorities of the public were opposed to use of troops if North Korea invaded South Korea, the Arabs cut off oil shipments to the United States, Nicaragua invaded Honduras in order to destroy contra rebel bases, the government of El Salvador were about to be defeated by guerrillas or Arab forces invaded Israel. The leadership group was much more favorably disposed to the use of troops, as has been the case in earlier surveys. Majorities were in favor of use of troops not only in cases of Western Europe or Japan already cited, but if Arabs forces invaded Israel, North Korea invaded South Korea, or the Nicaraguan government allowed the Soviet Union to establish a

missile base in that country. The public response was evenly divided regarding the Nicaragua missile base question. A plurality of 45% favored using troops but 42% were opposed. Generally, the willingness to use troops overseas is closely related to perceptions of vital interest.

ROLES OF CONGRESS, CIA

The public and leaders were generally supportive of the administration in the fall of 1986, especially in comparison with 1982, on the appropriate role of Congress in foreign policy. Those who believed the Congressional role was too weak declined substantially among both groups. Those who viewed Congress' role as being too strong went up slightly on the public side and significantly on the leadership side. The January 1987 poll showed some increase in public support for a stronger role by Congress. A similar shift occurred in both public and leadership attitudes on whether the CIA should be encouraged to work covertly to weaken or overthrow governments unfriendly to the United States. A substantial 13 point change occurred among leaders in terms of greater support for the covert role by the CIA and there was an equally sharp drop in those opposed. A smaller change occurred among the public.

GAPS AMONG THE ADMINISTRATION, THE PUBLIC, AND THE LEADERS

A substantial gap continued between the views of leaders and the public on a large number of foreign policy issues. In some areas, the views of both are in conflict with the policies and performance of the Reagan administration. Leaders continue to favor a more activist role for the United States in the world, are generally more interventionalist and more supportive of the "Reagan Doctrine" of backing anti-communist guerrillas in some countries around the world. Leaders continue to be more internationalist, notably in support of free trade and military as well as economic foreign aid. Leaders give a high priority to defending allies' security as a foreign policy goal and lower emphasis on strengthening the United Nations. They are generally less concerned about protecting American jobs at home or promoting American business overseas. Leaders are less inclined to endorse the goal of "containing communism" but more disposed to consider as a "great threat" the coming to power of a communist government in specific countries such as Mexico, Saudi Arabia or France. By a large margin of 42%, leaders support military aid to other nations and are considerably less worried about aid to Central America leading to United States military involvement there. Leaders are overwhelmingly opposed to negotiating with terrorists, as is the public; they are more inclined than the public to favor use of military force against terrorist groups, but less inclined to favor the assassination of terrorist leaders.

On relations with the Soviet Union, both leaders and public give a higher priority to cooperative endeavors than has the Reagan administration, and are critical of the administration's handling of relations with the Soviet Union. Both are also critical of the administration's performance on the Middle East, international trade policy, human rights and terrorism.

In addition, there were notable differences, within the leadership sample on the defense budget, the "Reagan Doctrine," the covert role of the CIA and a number of others. There were significant differences between administration representatives and other leadership categories, especially labor, media, education and religion, on support for the invasion of Grenada, the effort to overthrow the government of Nicaragua, the bombing of Libya and increased defense spending.

One important overall result that emerges from this survey is that public support for a more active United States role in the world has increased. This represents a change from earlier surveys and doubtless reflects the perception of favorable change in the United States/Soviet military balance and the higher estimation of the role that the United States actually plays, as well as the role the nation should play, in the world. In sum, while there is sharp disagreement with the Reagan administration on specific policy matters, there is also considerable support for the Administration's restoration of the military balance – and greater confidence in the America's world role.

I. Priority of Foreign Policy

We may begin this analysis of public opinion and foreign policy by first asking how important foreign policy issues are for Americans today—both for the public and for leaders in the United States. How does the priority attached to foreign affairs compare with that accorded domestic policy issues? How closely do people follow these different sorts of issues—both generally and in specific terms? To put the matter a little differently, what is their "map" of public affairs, and how and where does foreign policy fit into it? In a period when economic problems have receded a bit in the developed world, where is the international horizon?

ATTENTIVENESS TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS

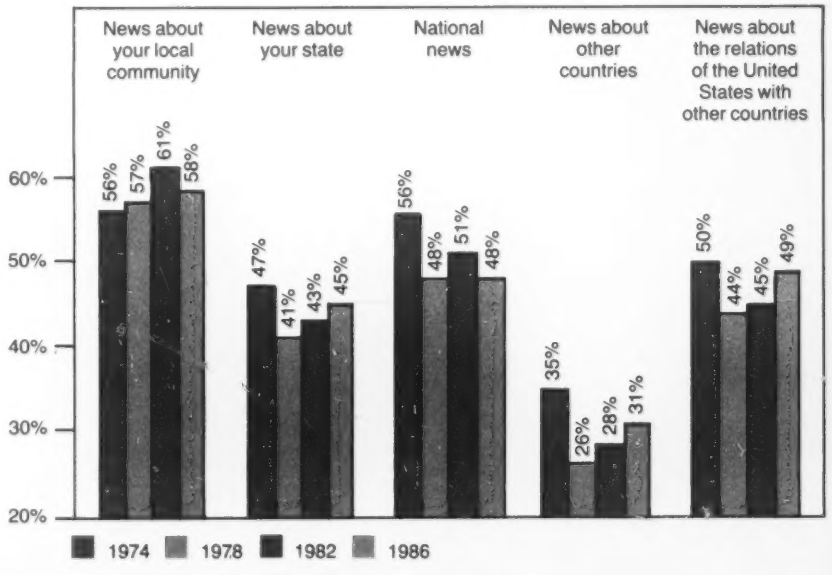
Following a full generation of intense international activism after World War II, a generation in which the primacy of foreign policy was rarely challenged, the decade of the 1970s was characterized by many commentators as "quiescent and inward-looking"; the proportion of those approving an active role in world affairs for the U.S. declined from the 70% range of the 1950s to 59% in 1978. That characterization of "inward-looking" seemed to us to be still applicable in 1982 when only 54% approved an active role. But we now see signs of a reaffirmation of active interest in foreign policy as we move into the latter part of the decade. As the ravages of inflation have receded, and as we have climbed up from the recession that afflicted the United States and much of the world in the early 1980s, we find a noticeable disposition to look outward once more. Sixty-four percent of the public now think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs, a 10% jump over the past four years (see Chapter II).

With a perspective of the last eight years, we can see (in Figure I-1) a slow but steady increase in the proportion of the population that is very interested in news about other countries and in news about U.S. relations with other countries, while interest in local and national news is essentially at 1978 levels. Furthermore, while the American public is still more interested in local news than in any other kind, news concerning our relations with other countries now ranks second in public interest, having overtaken national news. The Reykjavik summit meeting in October 1986 may have had an impact on these figures, but they are consonant with the results of other questions that suggest an increasing international awareness.

In comparing this general interest in news of different types with the expressed interest in news about specific events, the proportion of the population that follows specific events in the news seems to be growing also. At the same time, this proportion is somewhat smaller than the proportion declaring a general interest in such news. For example, while 49% declare that they are "very interested" in news about relations with other countries, only 20% say they have followed news about the fighting in Central America "very closely" (up from 15% in 1982), and only 29% say the same about negotiations on strategic arms limitations (up from 22% in 1982).

On the basis of responses to questions about interest in news about other countries and in news about U.S. relations with other countries, and about how closely people followed news about four events (fighting in Central America, problems in the Middle East, negotiations for strategic arms limitations, and events in South Africa), we have constructed an index of attentiveness to foreign affairs news. Those who scored in the top third on the additive

FIGURE I-1 (The Public)
PERCENT VERY INTERESTED IN VARIOUS TYPES OF NEWS
1974, 1978, 1982, 1986



scale of attentiveness we call the "attentive public," and we from time to time draw attention to the differences between the views of this group and the views of the medium and low attentives on particular subjects. In 1986 the size of the attentive public was 23% of the sample.

FOREIGN POLICY AND THE NATIONAL AGENDA

When we asked people about the biggest problems confronting the country today, we discovered a striking shift that reflects the rising sensitivity to foreign affairs and a commensurate decline in concern for the economic issues that had been predominant since the end of the Vietnam War. The result now is a more evenly distributed concern for economic and social as well as foreign policy issues than has been apparent for many years. Only time will tell whether the country is drifting back toward the "normal" post World War II situation, when foreign policy issues dominated media attention and public concerns.

Overall, Table I-1 shows the sharp decline in economic problems (and in related energy problems) particularly over the last four years, the rise in selected social issues, and the increase in the *relative* attention being paid to a battery of foreign policy concerns: 26% of the "biggest problems facing the government" in 1986 were foreign policy problems. In 1982 the comparable figure was 15% and in 1978 only 11%. Put a little differently, foreign policy problems have more than doubled in their importance to the American people in the last eight years. This general trend holds also for the leadership sample: In 1986, 42% of the "biggest problems" identified by the leaders were foreign policy problems, compared with 29% in 1982 and 23% in 1978.

In 1978 inflation was clearly the biggest problem. It was cited by 67% of the public and by 85% of the leadership sample. In 1982 unemployment was the chief concern, cited by 64% of the public and for 53% of the leaders. As the rate of inflation dropped precipitously from 1978 to 1986, and as unemployment subsided from 1982 to 1986, both of these issues lost their prominence. Unemployment is still one of the biggest problems, mentioned by one-fourth of the population, but it is matched now by a concern for drug abuse, which was not featured in public responses in the past, and for war, peace, and defense issues.

Among the leadership sample, unemployment and drug abuse are also treated equally, but at a much lower level–7% and 8% respectively. Two issues that stand out as biggest problems for this group are government spending (at 57%, it exceeds the 1982 leaders' concern over unemployment) and the balance of payments (26%).

The group of foreign policy issues on this list of "biggest problems" shows a rise in the number of differentiated concerns that are troubling the American people. Arms control, relations with the Soviet Union, and terrorism (a new issue in the list) are now seen as more important than many others, while nuclear issues continue their rise. Among the leaders, the balance of payments problem (26%), arms control (17%) and U.S.–Soviet relations (16%) are seen as the most important problems after government spending and generalized references to the economy.

PRIORITIES AMONG GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Another way to weigh the relative importance of foreign policy in the thinking of our respondents is to compare the government programs that they would like to see

Table I-1. Most important problems

"What do you feel are the two or three biggest problems facing the country today?"[1]

	Public			Leaders		
	1986	1982	1978	1986	1982	1978
ECONOMY						
Unemployment	26%	64%	19%	7%	53%	25%
Inflation	8	35	67	2	19	85
Taxes	6	6	18	2	3	6
Energy	1	3	11	1	2	23
Other	17	22	n.a.*	32	58	n.a.
GOVERNMENT						
Excessive spending	12	5	9	57	12	13
Other	10	13	17	8	10	22
SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND POLICY						
Crime	10	16	9	4	3	2
Welfare	2	3	8	2	1	3
Drug abuse	27	3	1	8	1	1
Immorality	7	6	2	4	5	3
Poverty	10	2	3	6	2	3
Education	5	2	4	6	4	3
Other	30	19	21	18	14	32
FOREIGN POLICY						
Foreign economic problems	7	4	4	33	10	10
Regional problems	4	2	1	5	2	4
War/peace/defense	25	18	8	44	37	27
Relations with USSR, and other Communist countries	7	2	2	16	12	8
Terrorism	5	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.
Other	13	10	9	12	17	18
None, Don't know	3	2	4	*	*	0
Sum of percentages	235[2]	237	217	269	265	288
Foreign policy problems as percentage of total	26%	15%	11%	42%	29%	23%

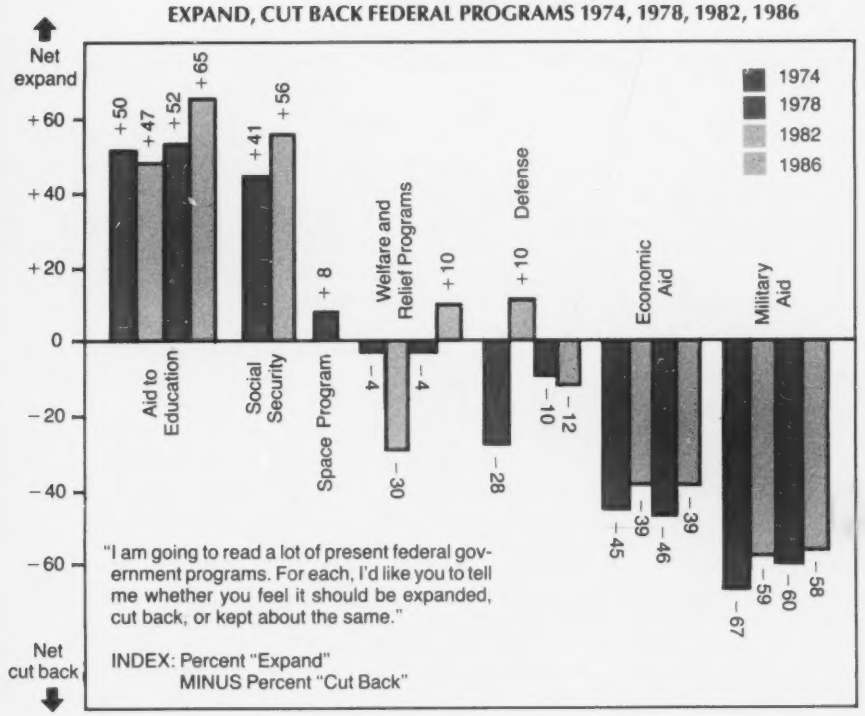
1. There is a very slight change in the wording of this question since 1978, when we asked respondents to name "the two or three biggest problems facing the country today that you would like to see the federal government do something about." Because the role of the federal government in the solution of national problems itself became perceived as a political problem since the 1980 elections, we decided that comparability with prior surveys would be enhanced if we dropped the qualifying phrase "that you would like to see the federal government do something about."

2. The sum of percentages exceeds 100% because of multiple responses.

*Less than ½%

*n.a. = not asked

FIGURE 1-2 (The Public)
EXPAND, CUT BACK FEDERAL PROGRAMS 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986



expanded with those they would like to cut back. For this purpose we listed three foreign policy programs – defense spending and economic and military aid to foreign nations; three domestic programs – education, welfare and relief programs, and social security; and the space program, which has both foreign policy and domestic dimensions. Of these seven programs, we have a good trend line on five, and a start on a sixth (social security). As in past reports, we have calculated an index of support for each program by subtracting the percentage of those who wanted it cut back from the percentage of those who wanted it expanded. Results for all four surveys are shown in Figure I-2, where positive scores – those above the line – indicate net public support for expansion of programs, and negative scores – those below the line – indicate net public desire to cut them back. For example, the score of +55 for social security is derived from 60% who wish to see the program expanded and 5% who wish to see it cut back.

Figure I-2 shows the continued priority accorded by the public to domestic programs over foreign policy programs. All three foreign policy programs have negative scores (−58, −36, −12); three domestic programs have positive scores (+65, +55, +10); and the space program, with a foot in both camps, stands slightly on the plus side (+7). There can be no question that the American people as a whole would rather see their government invest in social programs before investing in defense and foreign military and economic assistance.

A rapid glance at Figure I-2 tells us that both economic and military aid have been the least-favored programs over the twelve-year period of these surveys and that there have been only small changes in public preferences with respect to them over time. Aid to education and social security, on the other hand, continue to enjoy the public's favor. Welfare and relief programs, which dropped sharply in popularity eight years ago, have dramatically regained their ground, probably as a consequence of the greater concern about unemployment after 1978.

The space program is new to this list. In the wake of the "Challenger" disaster, it is interesting to note that the program enjoys a small margin of public support.

Net public sentiment on defense spending continues to be negative. In 1978 defense had turned around the net negative evaluation it had suffered since the Vietnam War; indeed, President Reagan came into office with a pledge to increase defense spending to make up for the years during which it had lost public favor. But by 1982 the figures of 1978 were reversed. In 1978, 34% wanted to expand defense spending and 24% wanted to cut it back (a net +10); in 1982, 24% wanted to expand it and 34% wanted to cut it back (a net −10). In 1986, 22% wanted to expand it, and 34% continued to want to cut it back (a net −12). Factors that account for the continued net negative support for defense spending, and which are evident at other points in this survey, must include growing concern about the threat of nuclear war; growing realization of the impact that defense spending is having on more favored social programs; and, of course, an understanding that President Reagan has already expanded defense spending by a substantial amount, creating the perception that he has succeeded in changing the international military balance in America's favor (see Chapter V).

II. Foreign Policy Goals: Perceptions and Performance

U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Early in this century many Americans hoped to avoid entangling alliances and to minimize U.S. involvement in world affairs. But the experience of World War II and the Cold War transformed the public's attitudes. Ever since the 1940s a large and fairly stable proportion of the public – usually about two-thirds of it – has said that we should "take an active part" in world affairs rather than "stay out." The exact percentage in favor of an active part has risen or fallen depending upon circumstances. The unhappy experience of the Vietnam War led to a slight increase in neo-isolationism. The late 1970s and early 1980s also appear to have been a time of some discouragement and skepticism about the part the U.S. should or could play in the world. On the other hand, there is evidence of a post-Vietnam rebound in the early 1970s and a rise of activism in the middle 1980s. All these changes have been fairly small and temporary, however. (See Table II-1.)

In particular, the rather low level of activism expressed in 1982 (a year of a troubled American economy) jumped right back up to the usual postwar range in 1986. The suggestion in our 1983 report of a possible "slow retreat" from activism now seems to have been premature.

As one might expect, foreign policy leaders are much more committed to an active role. In fact they have been virtually unanimous on this point in every one of our surveys since 1974. Members of the public with high levels of formal education tend to agree with the leaders on this point. In 1986, for example, 77% of the college educated but only 33% of those with a grade school education thought we should take an active part in world affairs.

Table II-1. Desires for an active U.S. role in world affairs
(Percentage saying U.S. should take an active part in world affairs)

	Public		Leaders	
	active part	stay out	active part	stay out
1986	64%	27%	98%	1%
1982	**54**	**35**	**98**	**1**
1978	59	29	97	1
1974	**66**	**24**	**n.a.***	**n.a.**
1973	66	31	n.a.	n.a.
1956	**71**	**25**	**n.a.**	**n.a.**
1952	68	23	n.a.	n.a.
1948	**70**	**24**	**n.a.**	**n.a.**

*n.a. = not asked

The rebound in public activism during the 1980s may well be related to the Reagan administration's foreign policy, which in the autumn of 1986 – before the unfolding of the Iranian arms scandal – was popular in certain respects. An indication of this is the big jump in public perceptions that the U.S. in fact "plays a more important and powerful role as the world leader today as compared to ten years ago" rather than a "less important" or "as important" a role. The modest 27% of the public that saw a more powerful role in 1982 (about the same as in 1978 and 1974) rose a full 14 percentage points, to 41%, in 1986. The leaders' assessments on this point changed even more dramatically: the weak 10% perception of a "more important role" in 1982 rose a remarkable 23 percentage points, to 33%, in 1986. (See Table II-2.)

Although our most recent survey provides a considerable amount of unhappy news for the Reagan administration, this particular finding indicates one outstanding success. Both the general public and our sample of leaders were far more convinced that the U.S. had become a more important and powerful world leader in 1986 than they had been in 1982. Amer-

Table II-2. Perceptions of the U.S. as a world leader as compared to ten years before.

	Public		Leaders	
	more important and powerful	less important	more important and powerful	less important
1986	41%	26%	33%	27%
1982	**27**	**44**	**10**	**52**
1978	29	41	16	59
1974	**28**	**38**	**n.a.***	**n.a.**

*n.a. = not asked

icans were more self-confident. As we will see, this sense of security contributed to a desire for arms control and détente.

PERCEPTIONS OF FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS

In our surveys we have regularly asked people not only to name one or more of the biggest problems facing the country (as discussed in Chapter I), but also to name the two or three biggest *foreign policy* problems facing the United States. The responses are displayed in Table II-3. First, of course, many Americans see the arms race and danger of nuclear war as a crucial foreign policy problem. In 1986 about half of the people mentioned them. Or, to put it another way, about one-third of all the *responses* concerned nuclear war and the arms race, up substantially from 29% in 1982 and only 20% in 1978. The militant rhetoric and deterioration in U.S.–Soviet relations of the Reagan years appear to have increased Americans' concerns about nuclear war. Foreign policy leaders focused even more sharply than the public on war and the arms race, with virtually everyone mentioning them; 36% of the total "important problem" responses related to that subject in 1986 and 1982, up from 29% in 1978.

International terrorism was much in the public mind in 1986. Twenty-one percent of the general public mentioned it, after no such responses (or at least no such coding category) in 1982 or 1978. The leaders also cite terrorism for the first time in 1986, but only 11% did so. To put it another way, terrorism took up 15% of the public's multiple responses but only 5% of the more numerous responses by leaders. Undoubtedly this concern about terrorism contributed to the public's shock when U.S. arms sales to Iran were revealed.

Although their relative importance declined, economic issues were cited by many members of the public. Fifteen percent mentioned the balance of trade, up a bit from 1982. (Only 2% mentioned the relatively new issue of immigration of illegal aliens, about the same as in 1982.) Foreign policy leaders devoted a smaller part of their responses to such concerns, but 17% of them (down slightly from 1982) mentioned the balance of trade.

Between 1982 and 1986 there was one significant shift in the geographical areas of concern. In 1978 and in 1982 (when our survey was conducted during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon) the Middle East provoked a great deal of worry. In the more tranquil year 1986, mentions of Middle East problems dropped substantially on both the public and leadership levels.

By the same token, concerns about Latin America–especially Nicaragua, where the Contra war continued, and Mexico, where economic and political stability had come into question – rose between 1982 and 1986. This was especially true among the leaders; the 3% who mentioned it as a problem in 1978 became 8% in 1982 and 12% in 1986 (Table II-3).

South Africa's system of apartheid and the issue of U.S. trade and investment in South Africa were prominent in the headlines in 1986, and 3% of the public mentioned these as important problems, up from virtually none in the earlier surveys. Five percent of the leaders cited South African issues.

Although Europe received a high priority

Table II-3. Perceptions of foreign policy problems.
(Percentages of the total number of "biggest problem" responses.)

	Public			Leaders		
	1986	1982	1978	1986	1982	1978
War, arms race with USSR	31%	29%	20%	36%	39%	29%
Terrorism	13	0	0	5	0	0
General foreign policy	15	23	22	15	18	18
U.S. economy	13	13	17	13	9	13
Latin America	7	3	4	12	8	3
Middle East	5	13	13	6	15	18
South Africa	3	1	2	5	1	6
Europe	2	5	1	3	6	2
Asia	0	1	2	1	2	8
Miscellaneous and don't know	11	12	19	4	2	3
Total responses	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table II-4. Foreign policy goals for the United States, 1986
(Percent "very important")

	Public	Leaders
Protecting the jobs of American Workers	78%	43%
Securing adequate supplies of energy	69	72
Worldwide arms control	69	83
Combatting world hunger	63	60
Reducing U.S. trade deficit with foreign countries	62	n.a.*
Containing communism	57	43
Defending U.S. allies' security	56	78
Matching Soviet military power	53	59
Strengthening the United Nations	46	22
Protecting the interests of American business abroad	43	32
Promoting and defending human rights in other countries	42	44
Helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations	37	46
Protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression	32	29
Helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations	30	29

*n.a. = not asked

with both the public and leaders, very few people cited Western Europe as a major foreign policy problem in 1986 except for the 7% of the leaders mentioning NATO. And hardly anyone (fewer than 1% of the public and 1% of the leaders) mentioned any Asian country, a contrast with the 17% of leaders who cited improving relations with mainland China in 1978 and the 6% in 1982.

FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

The American public holds a relatively clear and coherent set of goals for U.S. foreign policy, goals that have remained much the same in each of the four surveys conducted since 1974. Most Americans put a high priority on domestic economic goals, somewhat less on the aims of building military strength and containing communism, and the least emphasis on altruistic aims of helping other countries with their problems. (See ranking of goals in Table II-4.)

The most heavily endorsed goal by far was "protecting the jobs of American workers," cited as very important by 78% of the sample – the same percentage as in the recession year of 1982, and little different from 1974 or 1978. Shortly behind protecting jobs comes "securing adequate supplies of energy" (69%) (also fairly steady over 12 years, despite ebbs and flows during energy crises) and "reducing U.S. trade deficit with foreign countries" (62%), which we included for the first time in 1986 to replace the formerly very popular "keeping up the value of the dollar."

Most altruistic goals won much less support. "Strengthening the United Nations," once a cherished aim of most Americans, was considered very important by only 46%; "promoting and defending human rights in other countries" (a Carter administration priority) by 42%; "helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations" by 37%; "protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression" by 32%; and "helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations" (a Reagan administration goal) by a mere 30%. The chief exception to this trend is the strong (63%) endorsement of "combatting world hunger" as a very important goal (up 5% since 1982), presumably reflecting widespread publicity about starvation in Ethiopia and elsewhere. For the most part, however, Americans do not want to get involved in most other countries' problems.

Strategic political and military aims occupy a middle ground. Such goals as "containing communism," "defending our allies' security," and "matching Soviet military power" were called very important by moderate majorities of the public. But the goal of "worldwide arms control" was judged very important by 69% of the public. Support for arms control (up 5% since 1982) was reflected at many different points in our survey.

The leaders in our sample, like the general public, put a relatively low priority on the altruistic goals, especially protecting weak nations against aggression, promoting democratic governments, and strengthening the United Nations. (They were decidedly less enthusiastic about the UN than the public was, a fundamental change from the early postwar period.) The leaders agreed with the public on the great importance of arms control, putting that goal at the very top of the list – with 83% calling it very important. Once again the second highest priority for American leaders was defending our allies (78%) – a level supported in each of our surveys.

In other respects, the leaders differed from the public. They consistently focused less on domestic economic objectives, with 72% calling the assurance of adequate energy supplies very important, but only 43% (far below the public's 78%) saying the same about protecting the jobs of American workers. It is perhaps not surprising that the public, which includes many workers and their families, cared more about jobs. For example, about 80% of the large segment of the public with incomes under $35,000 considered protecting jobs "very important," but a somewhat lower 67% of those with incomes over $50,000 did so.

The leaders picked and chose among strategic aims, expressing less enthusiasm about containing communism (43%) or matching Soviet power (59%), or in "protecting the interests of American business abroad."

RATING GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

In the light of these foreign policy goals, how did our respondents rate the government's performance? The answer is not very encouraging to the Reagan administration. At the time of our autumn 1986 survey President Reagan himself was very popular, and a slight majority of the public (52%) gave an "excellent" or "good" rating to the administration's handling of "overall foreign policy," as opposed to only 43% "fair" or "poor." When we asked the same question in mid-January 1987, after revelations about the Iran-contra affair, the "excellent" or "good" ratings dropped 22 percentage points, to 30% – a serious loss. But even in November 1986, when the survey turned to more specific topics, the ratings became more negative, with the public not giving a majority of positive ratings for any one of the seven specific areas we asked about. (See Table II-5.)

Table II-5. Evaluation of administration's performance

"How would you rate the Reagan administration's handling of the following problems? Would you say the administration's handling of _____ was excellent, good, fair or poor?"

	Public				Leaders	
	Jan. 1987		Nov. 1986		Nov. 1986	
Problem	Excellent/ Good	Fair/ Poor	Excellent/ Good	Fair/ Poor	Excellent/ Good	Fair/ Poor
Overall foreign policy	30%	67%	52%	43%	47%	53%
Terrorism	28	68	44	53	54	46
Human rights	n.a.*	n.a.	43	52	31	69
Arms control	n.a.	n.a.	42	50	42	57
Middle East	n.a.	n.a.	40	51	32	67
Relations with Soviet Union	n.a.	n.a.	38	56	41	58
Trade policy	n.a.	n.a.	25	61	38	60
Illegal immigration	n.a.	n.a.	18	72	26	70

*n.a. = not asked

The administration fared best with the public on its handling of terrorism, human rights, arms control, and the Middle East. In each of these cases some 40–44% of the public said "excellent" or "good," while 50–53% said "fair" or "poor" in the fall. (By January 1987, however, favorable judgments on handling of terrorism dropped to 28%, with 68% unfavorable.) But on handling relations with the Soviet Union, the balance was 38% positive and 56% negative. And the administration's handling of illegal immigration and of foreign trade was judged as "poor" by substantial numbers of citizens–by 40%, in the case of illegal immigration.

The leaders were more favorable than the public on terrorism (the one area in which a majority actually said "excellent" or "good") and on trade policy and immigration. But leaders were even more critical than the public of the administration's record in human rights and the Middle East.

The Reagan administration won selective praise for its performance on certain foreign policy actions. A majority (59%) rated the U.S. bombing of Libya in 1986 as "excellent" or "good," and a plurality (47%) gave a positive rating to the U.S. invasion and occupation of Grenada in 1983. But the U.S. response to the destruction of Korean flight 007 by Soviet military planes in 1983 was rated "fair" or "poor" by a two-to-one margin. And U.S. efforts to overthrow the leftist government of Nicaragua received an overwhelmingly negative response, 60% to 20%. (See Table II-6.)

The leaders' judgments followed the same pattern almost exactly, when "don't know" responses (less frequent among leaders) are excluded. But the leaders were even more negative in their evaluation of the administration's efforts in Nicaragua, by a 79% to 18% margin, with a majority (52%) rating administration action "poor." The reactions to Grenada and Libya revealed big differences between the administration sample and the other leaders.

EVALUATION

What can one conclude from this? Certainly the public likes success. The quick and successful Libya and Grenada operations, with little loss to U.S. forces, won public approval, whereas the long and unsuccessful effort in Nicaragua did not, even before the revelations of diverted Iranian arms money to the contras. In a number of

Table II-6. Ratings of U.S. government actions

"How would you rate the following actions of the U.S. Governemnt? Would you say _____ was/were excellent, good, fair, or poor?"

	Public		Leaders	
	Excellent/ Good	Fair/ Poor	Excellent/ Good	Fair/ Poor
The U.S. bombing of Libya	59%	33%	57%	42%
The U.S. invasion and occupation of Grenada	47	38	55	44
The U.S. response to the destruction of Korean flight 007 by Soviet military planes	27	58	39	60
U.S. efforts to overthrow the leftist government of Nicaragua	20	60	18	79

Table II-7. The perceived military balance

"At the present time, which nation do you feel is stronger in terms of military power, the United States or the Soviet Union–or do you think they are about equal militarily?"

	Public			Leaders	
	1986	1982	1979*	1986	1982
U.S. stronger	28%	21%	33%	28%	20%
About equal	48	42	26	59	62
USSR stronger	17	29	32	11	15
Don't know	7	8	9	2	3
	100	100	100	100	100

*Gallup survey #135-G

Table II-8. Relationships with the Soviet Union (Percentage in favor of cooperation)

"Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States have been the subject of disagreement for some time. Please tell me if you would favor or oppose the following types of relationships with the Soviet Union."

	Public	Leaders
Favor negotiating arms control agreements	80%	95%
Favor resuming cultural and educational exchanges	78	98
Favor increasing grain sales	57	82
Oppose restricting trade	52	73
Oppose prohibiting exchanges of scientists	53	83
Oppose limiting sales of advanced U.S. computers	33	20
Favor sharing technical information about defending against missile attacks.	23	n.a.*

*n.a. = not asked

places in the 1986 survey the public indicated general approval of covert operations and selective uses of force, but in specific instances there is evidence of strong opposition to application of the "Reagan Doctrine" of undermining leftist regimes, including in Nicaragua.

These 1986 findings are consistent with the public's responses to the different set of situations posed in 1982. In that year, only U.S. handling of the Falkland Islands War (in which the U.S. stayed more or less uninvolved) won substantial approval. The public reacted negatively to administration handling of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the fighting between government and rebels in El Salvador, the declaration of martial law in Poland, and the seizure of U.S hostages in Iran—none of which had shown clearly beneficial results. Performance, it seems fair to say, is judged largely by results.

RELATIONS WITH THE USSR

It is clear from the public's assessment of foreign policy problems that relations with the USSR are at the center of U.S. foreign policy. It is also clear from Americans' statements of foreign policy goals that superpower competition wins limited enthusiasm: — arms control and domestic economic concerns are primary. This has important consequences for Americans' policy preferences concerning the Soviet Union.

The perception of Soviet military superiority that so disturbed some members of the public in the early Reagan years had been decisively reversed by 1986. In 1982, 29% thought the USSR was "stronger," While 21% picked the U.S. (Table II-7). But in 1986, 28% found the U.S. stronger and only 17% the Soviets. (In both years just under half the population thought the superpowers were about equal.) Fewer leaders had accepted the Soviet superiority argument, but an even larger plurality saw the U.S. ahead in 1986 than in 1982. In one sense this change represented a triumph for the Reagan administration's arms build-up. But this success may have undermined support for a continuation of that build-up. And the changed perceptions probably also contributed to some increase in the already strong public support for cooperative relationships with the Soviet Union.

Eight specific areas of superpower relationships in 1986 were polled, and a majority of the public favored cooperative action in all but two of them (Table II-8). An overwhelming 81% favored negotiating arms control agreements. Seventy-eight percent (up 8% since 1982) wanted to resume educational and cultural exchanges. Fifty-seven percent (vs. 31% opposed) favored increasing grain sales to the Soviet Union. Fifty-two percent (up 10% since 1982) opposed restricting U.S.-Soviet trade. Fifty-three percent (against 36% previously) opposed prohibiting the exchange of scientists between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Only on the matters of limiting the sales of advanced U.S. computers to the Soviets (presumably because of the military implications) and sharing technical information about defending against missile attacks (a complex notion that suggest giving away important military secrets) did majorities of the public oppose cooperation.

Foreign policy leaders, with the same exception of computer sales, also favored cooperative relationships and by even larger margins. It is striking that a decade of tense relationship toward the USSR and frequently hostile rhetoric has not significantly diminished the desire for cooperation in a number of important areas.

III. Political Relationships and Commitments Abroad

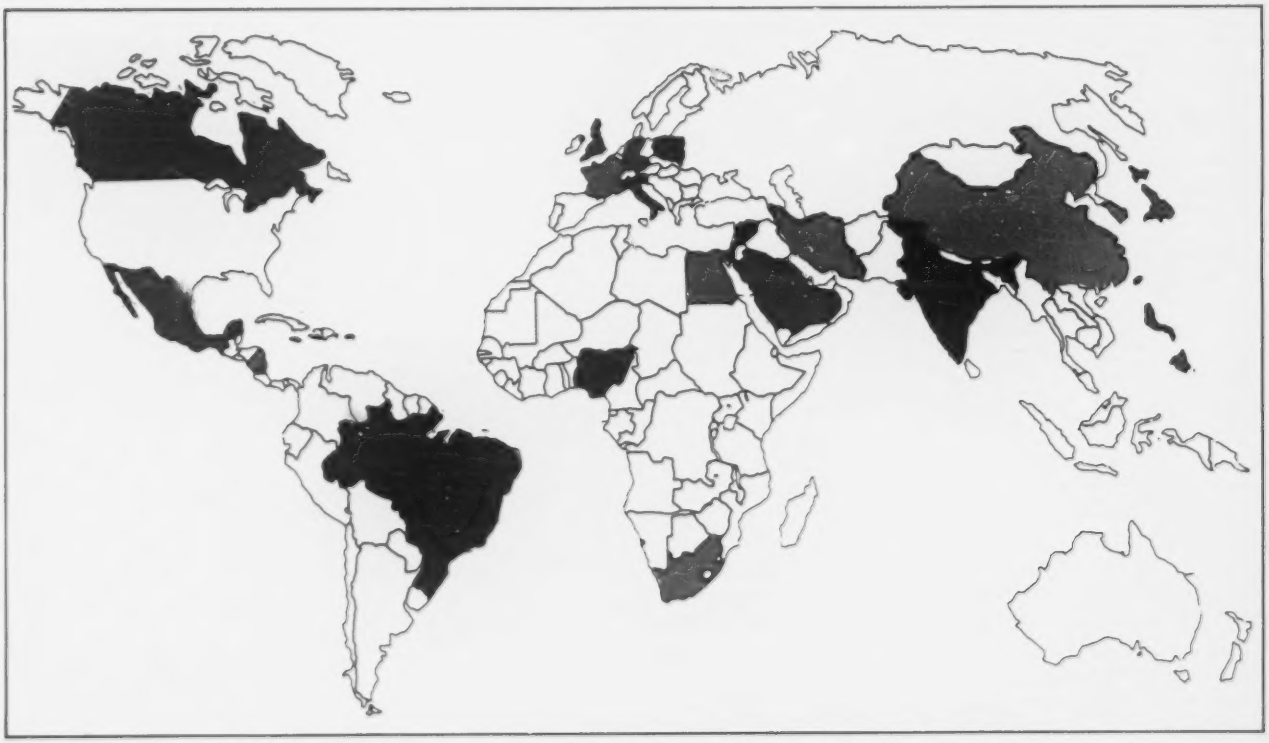
By November 1986 numerous observers commented that the United States had strained its relations with its neighbors, its allies, and its adversaries – whether through insensitivity to its neighbors' needs, failure to consult and honor its allies' interests at Reykjavik, or through hostile rhetoric directed at adversaries. How other nations felt about the United States is not the subject of this survey and analysis. What is clear is that both the American public and leaders were more favorably disposed toward neighbors and allies than before, whether measured by perceived vital interests or warmth of feeling. American preferences and priorities were, the same as in earlier surveys, heavily favoring neighbors and allies.

VITAL INTERESTS

In 1986, as in 1982, both the American public and leaders saw the United States as having vital interests in a variety of countries throughout the world (see Table III-1 and Figure III-1). "Vital interests" are defined as "interests important to the United States for political, economic or security reasons." Also affecting the perceptions of vital interest is the prominence of a country in the public media. For example, the perception of South Africa's vital interest to the U.S. jumped 20% from 1982 to 1986 in the public mind, partly because of the media attention given to events there.

Public respondents were asked to rate a selected list of 23 countries and leaders of 16 countries. Most notable is the continuity and stability reflected in the vital interest rankings of the countries by both the public and the leadership. Top priority was given by both to our neighbors, to our allies, and

FIGURE III-1
PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. VITAL INTERESTS — 1986 (The Public)



—OVER 70% Japan Canada Great Britain Saudi Arabia Federal Republic of Germany Israel Mexico The Philippines
—50-70% Egypt People's Republic of China France Iran Taiwan South Africa South Korea Nicaragua
—37-49% Brazil Syria Italy
—36% AND LESS Nigeria India Poland

to Japan. Longtime political and cultural affinity was important, as were economic and strategic interests. Great Britain came out at the top on the public side (compared with third in 1982), followed closely by Canada, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Saudi Arabia, all at more or less the same level. Among the leaders, the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan once again came out at the very top with 98% declaring a vital interest there. U.S. neighbors Mexico and Canada followed with 96%, again confirming a long trend of rating American's northern and southern neighbors near the top in the vital interest category.

The public ranked Canada second and Mexico seventh – exactly where they were four years ago. Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany continue to be considered the most vital of American allies in Europe, both by the public and leaders. Once again, both Germany and Britain came out well ahead of France. One important addition to the list in 1986 was the Philippines, which (with 74% and 81% on the public and leadership sides) ended up in the top ten countries with both groups. The differences in ratings of the most highly rated countries are small; what is of greater significance is that the same countries consistently appear among the top seven, rather than the precise order among them.

Two Middle Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia and Israel, continued to receive high ratings, both on the public side (with 77% and 76%, respectively, and on the leadership side (with 88% and 86%). Given the attention focused on South Africa during the four-year period, it is not surprising that both the public's and the leaders' ranking had gone up substantially. Fifty-eight percent of the public and 63% of the leaders saw a vital interest there, representing an increase of 20% on the public side and 9% on the leaders' side. While the precise motivations for seeing a vital interest there are no doubt varied – economics, security, humanitarian reasons – South Africa is a country whose future is seen as important by many Americans.

The People's Republic of China continues to be represented in the top ten countries on the vital interest chart, but its perceived importance has declined – four points below that of 1982 and ten points below that of 1978. The three countries in the public view that increased most in the 1982-86 period are: South Africa (+20%), South Korea (+15%), and Syria (+11%). In the leaders' view, two of the three are included, with South Korea increasing by 14% and South Africa by 9%; both are countries where security considerations are important for the United States. Among those countries whose importance has been perceived by the public to have diminished since 1982 are Poland (8%) and Egypt (5%). The continued low priority given to Poland is surprising considering the Reagan administration's priority interest in Poland and the continuing attention which that country receives by the American press. Egypt under President Mubarak clearly played a less important role in the world scene than it did four years ago. The Middle East has not been an area where the Reagan administration has taken an active role in making further progress toward accommodation between Israel and the Arab states.

On the leadership side, the country whose perceived importance has decreased most since 1982 is Brazil (−17%). While the Brazilian financial crisis has receded in attention in recent years, the return to democracy there has received widespread favorable attention. Therefore the 17% decline on the part of American leadership is surprising. No such decline occurred on the public side – Brazil remained at the same level as 1982. Although Brazil remains well down the list (18th) on the public's vital interest scale, it ranks in the top ten countries in favorability.

TABLE III-1. Attitude toward America's vital interests around the world— The Public

"Many people believe the United States has a vital interest in certain areas of the world and not in other areas. That is, certain countries of the world are important to the U.S. for political, economic or security reasons. I am going to read a list of countries. For each, tell me whether you feel the U.S. does or does not have a vital interest in that country."

	Does Have Vital Interest			
	1986		1982	
	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders
Great Britain	83%	94%	80%	97%
Canada	78	96	82	95
Japan	78	98	82	97
Federal Republic of Germany	77	98	76	98
Saudi Arabia	77	88	77	93
Israel	76	86	75	92
Mexico	74	96	74	98
The Philippines	73	81	n.a.*	n.a.
Egypt	61	n.a.	66	90
People's Republic of China	61	89	64	87
Nicaragua	60	63	n.a.	n.a.
South Africa	54	63	38	54
South Korea	58	80	43	66
France	56	82	58	84
Taiwan	53	48	51	44
Iran	50	n.a.	51	60
Syria	48	n.a.	36	46
Brazil	45	63	45	80
Italy	41	n.a.	35	79
India	36	55	30	57
Poland	35	n.a.	43	47
Nigeria	31	n.a.	32	53

*n.a. = not asked

It is not surprising that a larger percentage of the leadership than of the public saw the United States as having a vital interest in each country. The one exception (also true four years ago) was Taiwan, where 53% of the public saw vital interest, but only 48% of the leaders agreed. More important, almost twice as many of the leaders (51%) stated that the United States did not have a vital interest in Taiwan, compared with 28% of the public. Clearly, the decision by successive U.S. governments to recognize the People's Republic of China and to downgrade the importance of Taiwan is more thoroughly reflected in the leaders' attitudes. Taiwan comes out at the bottom of the list of countries rated on the leadership side.

EVALUATION

What is most significant in assessing views on vital interests is the remarkable consistency and continuity shown in all our surveys. In leadership attitudes, for example, there has been no change since 1978 toward the importance of the Federal Republic of Germany (98%, 98%, 98%), Great Britain (94%, 97%, 94%), Japan (99%, 97%, 98%), or France (90%, 84%, 82%). Although the variation is greater on the public side, once again what is most impressive are the similarities: Federal Republic of Germany (69%, 76%, 77%), Great Britain (66%, 80%, 83%), Japan (78%, 82%, 77%), France (54%, 58%, 56%), and Israel (78%, 75%, 76%). Despite the continuing world crises that are well-reported by the media, continuity has persisted among both public and leadership attitudes. There have been no sharp shifts in opinon. With only a few exceptions, vital interests are concentrated in countries that are neighbors and allies. Third World countries (excepting the Western hemisphere) have regularly been rated low.

TABLE III-2. Thermometer Ratings for countries—The Public

"Next I'd like you to rate the same countries on this feeling thermometer. If you feel neutral toward a country, give it a temperature of 50 degrees. If you have a warm feeling toward a country, give it a temperature higher than 50 degrees. If you have a cool feeling toward a country, give it a temperature lower than 50 degrees."

	Mean Temperature (degrees)		
	1986	1982	1978
Canada	77	74	72
Great Britain	73	68	67
Federal Republic of Germany	62	59	57
Japan	61	53	56
Mexico	59	60	58
Israel	59	55	61
The Philippines	59	n.a.*	n.a.
France	58	60	62
Italy	58	55	56
Brazil	54	54	52
Poland	53	52	50
People's Republic of China	53	47	44
Taiwan	52	49	51
South Korea	50	44	48
Saudi Arabia	50	52	48
Egypt	49	52	53
India	48	48	49
South Africa	47	45	46
Nigeria	46	44	47
Nicaragua	46	n.a.	n.a.
Syria	34	42	n.a.
Soviet Union	31	26	34
Iran	22	28	50

*n.a. = not asked

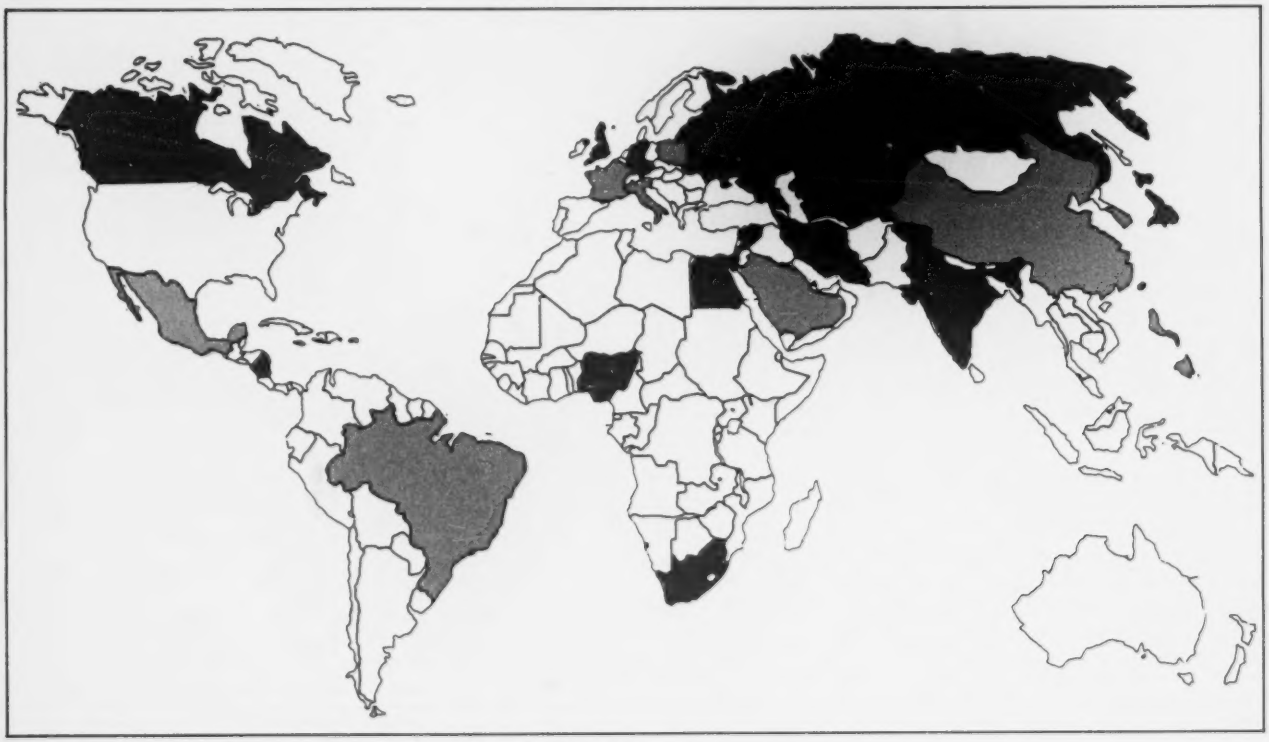
FAVORABILITY TOWARD COUNTRIES

In addition to assessing vital interests, the public was again asked to indicate their degree of "favorability" to 24 countries on a thermometer scale ranging from 0 degrees (very cold or unfavorable) and 100 degrees (very warm or highly favorable). A thermometer rating of 50 was designated as neutral. (See table III-2.)

As in 1982, NATO allies and neighbors once again came out at the top in favorability, starting with Canada, Great Britain, and the Federal Republic of Germany. This represents an increase in favorability for the Federal Republic compared with four years ago (fifth place) and makes the favorability rating comparable to its vital interest rating (or fourth, following Great Britain, Canada and Japan). The eight-degree increase in favorability for Japan (which ranked ninth in 1982) represents one of the largest shifts over the four-year period. Given the continuing massive trade deficit with Japan and the barrage of criticism of Japan by Congressional, labor and industrial leaders, it is remarkable that the American public views Japan in a more favorable light.

France was another country to change in ranking. It dropped from third in 1982 to eighth in 1986. The difference in mean temperature from year to year is less than the difference in ranking, and the change in rank does not necessarily mean any massive shift in attitude. (For France, the change in temperature was only two degrees.) The uncertainty about governmental stability in France caused by the cohabitation of a center-right prime minister and cabinet and a Socialist president and the refusal by the French government to permit overflight by U.S. military planes at the time of the Libyan attack in 1986 undoubtedly affected public attitudes toward France. Other close allies or neighbors of the United States continue to rank high, with Mexico (59 degrees) once again in fifth place, just slightly behind last year (third place with 60 degrees). Israel's ranking remained the same: fifth place both years.

FIGURE III-2
FAVORABILITY 1986 (The Public)



—60° AND WARMER Canada Great Britain Federal Republic of Germany Japan
—50-59° Israel Italy Brazil Poland Saudi Arabia South Korea Taiwan People's Republic of China France Mexico The Philippines
—40-49° India South Africa Nigeria Nicaragua Egypt
—UNDER 35° Iran Soviet Union Syria

At the bottom of scale, Iran replaced the Soviet Union as the country with the lowest favorability rating (22 degrees), followed by the Soviet Union with 31 degrees. Iran's 22-degree rating was well below the 50-degree rating in 1978, indicating a long-term drop in favorable attitudes among the American public toward Iran since the fall of the Shah and the coming to power of the Ayatollah Khomeini and continuing after the end of the 1980 hostage crisis. Given this sharply negative public attitude toward Iran, it is not surprising that President Reagan's efforts to reach an agreement with the Iran government to exchange hostages for arms provoked such a sharply negative response among the American people and their leaders. Countries associated with terrorism – whether Iran or Libya – fared badly throughout the survey.

Another notable development was the high favorability rating accorded to the Philippines, a new entry on the list. With a 59-degree rating, the Philippines came out at the same level as Mexico and Israel, and just slightly ahead of France and Italy. This no doubt reflected the long-standing ties between the United States and the Philippines, but also the saturation of coverage by the American media of the change in government and the widespread favorable publicity given to its new leader, President Corazon Aquino, who led one of the few successful democratic revolutions in the Third World.

FAVORABILITY TOWARD WORLD LEADERS

When the public was asked to give a favorability rating to various international figures (see Table III-3), American and allied figures ranked at the top together with selected religious leaders. A "thermometer" was used to measure the ratings ranging from 0° to 100° in terms of warmth with 50° being neutral. Once again, Pope John Paul II topped the list with a 71° average rating. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and U.S. President Ronald Reagan came in second, tied at 68 degrees. This represented an increase of 7° on the thermometer for Margaret Thatcher and a 14° increase for President Reagan. (This evaluation is based on data collected from October 28-November 12, 1986, prior to the impact of the Iran crisis on public opinion.)

The most impressive newcomer on the list, Philippine President Corazon Aquino, came in fourth with a 62-degree rating, reflecting the strong postive image she projected in the American media during the year after the fall of President Marcos. Once again former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger remained in the top five, with his 60-degree rating representing an increase of 6% over 1982, ranking just above Secretary of State George Shultz, whose 59-degree rating, represents an increase of 4 degrees over 1982. Henry Kissinger's increased favorability to fifth place in 1986 is

TABLE III-3. Thermometer ratings for personalities—The Public

"Now I would like you to rate some American and foreign leaders on this thermometer scale. What temperature would you give to:"

	Mean Temperature (0-100 degrees)
Pope John Paul II	71
British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher	68
President Ronald Reagan	68
Philippines President Corazon Aquino	62
Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger	60
Secretary of State George Shultz	59
Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger	57
Former President Jimmy Carter	56
Archibishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa	53
West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl	52
Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone	50
Chinese Party Chairman Deng Xiaoping	46
Former President Richard Nixon	45
Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev	42
Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega	29
Cuban President Fidel Castro	20
Libyan Leader Muammar Ghadafi	11

remarkable. He had been out of office almost 10 years, yet he continued to be ranked higher than most world leaders on the list. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger came in next, with 57 degrees.

Among foreign leaders, South Africa's Archibishop Desmond Tutu (53 degrees) followed President Aquino. He was followed by West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (52 degrees), Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone (50 degrees) and Chinese Party Chairman Deng Xiaoping (46 degrees). Libyan leader Muammar Ghadafi was last (11 degrees) and Cuban President Fidel Castro second to last with 20 degrees. Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was well down the list in ranking, but his 42-degree temperature represented an 11-degree increase over his predecessor in office in 1982, Premier Leonid Brezhnev, who came out at 31 degrees.

In 1982 President Reagan and former President Carter ended up with the same favorability rating (54 degrees). Four years later, President Reagan's rating of 68 degrees was 12 points higher than that of former President Carter. Data collected by the Gallup Organization on December 8 after the Iran arms crisis of late autumn 1986 indicated a sharp drop in Reagan's job performance rating (approval dropped from 63% on October 24 to 47% on December 4-5; disapproval increased from 29% to 44% during the same period). Yet President Reagan's approval rating as an individual declined only slightly during the same period, from 80% to 75%.

Leaders associated with terrorism continue to fare poorly with the American public. So do leaders of communist countries closely associated with the Soviet Union. Libyan leader Muammar Ghadafi replaced the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran at the bottom of the list. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega (29 degrees) had a rating below that of the country itself, which was given a 46-degree rating, well above that of the Soviet Union and Iran.

THREAT OF COMMUNISM

Despite consistent emphasis by the Reagan administration for six years on the threat of communism, no increased concern was reflected in either public or leadership reaction. To test the American public's views of the threat of a communist government's coming to power in different countries, the question was asked: "If the Communist Party came to power through peaceful elections" in each of six countries (Mexico, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, France, El Salvador and South Africa), "what kind of a threat would that represent: a great threat; somewhat of a threat; not very much of a threat; or no

TABLE III-4. Level of threat posed by elected communist government in various countries—1986

"I am going to read a list of countries. For each, tell me how much of a threat it would be to the U.S. if the communists came to power. What if the Communist Party came to power through peaceful elections in _____? Do you think this would be a great threat to the U.S., somewhat of a threat to the U.S., not very much of a threat to the U.S., or no threat at all to the U.S.?"

	Great Threat		Somewhat of A Threat		Not Very Much		No Threat At All		Don't Know	
	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders
Mexico	62%	74%	18%	20%	10%	4%	5%	2%	5%	n.a.*
Saudi Arabia	39	51	35	38	12	5	5	5	8	1
The Philippines	37	28	35	55	15	13	6	3	7	n.a.
France	30	41	38	38	18	16	8	5	6	n.a.
El Salvador	27	16	43	46	17	32	4	6	8	n.a.
South Africa	21	20	40	47	22	21	9	12	9	n.a.

*n.a. = not asked

threat at all to the United States?" (See Table III-4.) A majority of the public regards a communist takeover, even if by peaceful democratic means, as at least "somewhat of a threat" in all of these countries, but only in the case of neighbor Mexico do a majority (62%) say that a communist government would be a "great threat to the U.S." This figures drops to 39% in the case of Saudi Arabia, where concern is diminished by the lowered preoccupation with access to Saudi Arabian oil. It is 37% in the case of the Philippines and 30% in the case of France (where Communists did participate in the government during the first three years–1981-84–of the Mitterrand government). If the figures for "great threat" and "somewhat of a great threat" are combined, concern about communist expansion looks more substantial: 80% in the case of Mexico, 74% for Saudi Arabia, 72% for the Philippines, and 68% for France.

In most of the countries examined, American leaders are more likely to see a communist government as a "great threat to U.S. interests" than the public. Among leaders, 74% saw a great threat in the case of Mexico, 51% for Saudi Arabia, and 41% for France. If one combines the categories of "great threat" and "somewhat of a threat" for American leaders, Mexico records 94%; Saudi Arabia 89%; and France 79%. American leaders registered little change in attitude in the four years between 1982 and 1986. Among the public, moreover, no change occurred from 1982 to 1986 in attitudes toward the degree of threat represented by a communist government's coming to power, except in the case of Saudi Arabia (a drop from 49% to 39% occurred.) The same 10% decline was reflected in the leadership sample.

This year's results are consistent with those of the past decade. Less than half of the public and of American leaders see a "great threat" if a Communist government comes to power in most countries other than our most immediate neighbors. On the other hand, over two-thirds of the public and leaders continue to see at least "somewhat of a threat" in all of the countries sampled. The results over a decade continue to show that fear of communist governments per se carries a lesser degree of urgency than an attempt by the Soviet Union to extend its influence over a specific country.

TABLE III-5. Attitudes toward NATO

"Some people feel that NATO, the military organization of Western Europe and the United States, has outlived its usefulness, and that the United States should withdraw militarily from NATO. Others say that NATO has discouraged the Russians from trying a military takeover in Western Europe. Do you feel we should increase our commitment to NATO, keep our commitment what it is now, decrease our commitment but still remain in NATO, or withdraw from NATO entirely?"

	1986		1982		1978	
	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders
Increase Commitment	8%	8%	9%	7%	9%	21%
Keep commitment what it is	**62**	**77**	**58**	**79**	**58**	**65**
Decrease commitment	11	13	11	12	9	12
Withdraw entirely	**5**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**4**	**1**
Not sure	14	1	18	1	20	1

SUPPORT FOR NATO

The results of our study show once again that our longtime regional security alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, continues to enjoy strong support among the public and leaders (See Table III-5.) Among the public, 8% believe that we should increase the commitment, 62% would keep it what it is, and 11% would decrease the commitment, (little different from 1982). Eighty-five percent of the leaders want to either increase the commitment or keep it the same level (no change from four years ago). The last recent substantial change occurred between 1978 and 1982, a period marked by sharp increase at both levels in the support for NATO. The result is consistent with others throughout the report; they show a continued priority on the part of the American public and leaders for the NATO relationship with West European countries.

ATTITUDES TOWARD TROOPS IN WESTERN EUROPE

A number of commentators on both sides of the Atlantic have questioned American leadership attitudes toward a continued strong military presence in Europe. To test sentiment at the leadership level, we asked our sample a question that would characterize their attitude toward withdrawing troops: "leave American troops in Europe for the time being and preserve the American nuclear guarantee for Western Europe?"; or "withdraw American troops over the next five years and let the Europeans provide their own nuclear and conventional defense?" (as indicated in Table III-6). Eighty-two percent of American leaders favored the first alternative (leave American troops in Europe for the time being) and 16% favored the second (withdraw American troops over the next five years). To further test leadership attitudes, we asked a follow-up question of those who favored withdrawing troops over the next five years: "Would you still favor this if West Germany were to participate in the nuclear defense of Western Europe?" Of the group of 16% who favored withdrawing American troops over the next five years, the response was the following: 14% indicated that they would go ahead regardless of German participation in nuclear defense; 1% said they would not; and 1% said "don't know."

Although American leaders are often critical of individual European actions and freely debate various alternatives to current security arrangements in Europe, there remains a clear consensus that the U.S. should not withdraw militarily from Europe. Looking more closely at leadership attitudes on this question, 96% of the Congressional sample chose the first alternative (leave American troops in Europe for the time being), ten points higher than the administration sample.

TABLE III-6. Attitude toward troops in Western Europe—Leaders, 1986

"Some Americans favor bringing our troops home soon from Western Europe. Some Europeans think that if American troops go home, Europe will have to develop its own nuclear and conventional defense. Which of the following alternatives comes closer to your view:"

Attitude Toward Withdrawing Troops	
Leave American troops in Europe for the time being and preserve the American nuclear guarantee for Western Europe	82%
Withdraw American troops over the next five years and let the Europeans provide their own nuclear and conventional defense	16
Don't know	2
(If favor withdrawing troops:) *Would you still favor this if West Germany were to participate in the nuclear defense of Western Europe?*	
Attitude If West German Participation	
Yes	14%
No	1
Don't know	1

PRIORITY TOWARD EUROPE AND ASIA

Recognizing the considerable discussion in recent years about the alleged shift in leadership priorities away from Europe and toward Asia, we added some questions designed to further test leaders' attitudes on this subject. We asked the question: "Some Europeans are worried that both American popular attention and leadership attention are shifting away from Europe to Asia. Which area do you think is more important to the United States, Europe or Asia?" Forty-six percent said Europe was more important, 18% that Asia was more important, and 34% spontaneously replied that Europe and Asia are equally important. The results show that although Europe clearly continues to command the priority, many American leaders (52%) believe that both Europe and Asia are important. These results can be read in various ways: on the one hand, two and a half times as many leaders gave priority to Europe as gave priority to Asia. On the other hand, 52% of the sample believe that Asia is as important as Europe.

To probe leadership attitudes further, we posed questions about geographic preferences for study abroad and foreign language training preferences. Tables III-7 and III-8 shows the results on both questions. As the Table indicates, Europe continues to be the overwhelming favorite (69%) as an area for post-graduate study, with Asia a distant second (15%). In the response, the Congressional sample reflects the leadership average of 69% favoring Europe, while the administration figure was only 45% for Europe and 36% for Asia. There is further evidence elsewhere in our report that administration leaders are less oriented toward Europe than Congressional representatives—and less so than the American leadership as a whole. On the question on language preference, Spanish (which is both a European and an American language) came in first with 34%, followed by French (22%) and Japanese (16%). Since Spanish is the second most prevalent language spoken in the United States, the result is not surprising.

The responses to these questions designed to measure leadership attitudes toward geographical areas suggest that their interests and priorities have broadened as the United States has become involved in other areas of the world. Although Europe clearly remains at the top of the leaders' list of priorities on any scale, there is a strong interest in Asia and Latin America as well.

TABLE III-7. Attitude toward foreign cultures—Leaders, 1986

"If you had a son or daughter and were sending him or her abroad for post-graduate study, where would you most likely urge him or her to go?"

Geographic Area Preferred For Post-Graduate Study	
Europe	70%
Asia	15
South America	3
Africa	3
Middle East	3
Don't know	7

U.S. RELATIONS WITH CUBA

Americans continue to display a strong distaste for the current regime in Cuba and its leaders. At the same time they support the idea of re-establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba. Despite the Reagan administration's continued policy of hostility toward the Castro regime and the absence of any visible progress in the relationship, support for re-establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba increased slightly between 1982 and 1986 among the public. Fourteen percent of the American public were "very strongly in favor" of re-establishing diplomatic and economic relations and exchanging ambassadors with Cuba, and 39% were "fairly strongly in favor," an increase of five percentage points over 1982. Only seventeen percent were "fairly strongly opposed" (a drop of 2%), and an unchanged 18% were "very strongly opposed." Support for détente with adversaries is evident here. As in the case of the Soviet Union, continued hostility toward a country is combined with a willingness to take positive action to improve relations.

TABLE III-8. Attitude toward foreign cultures—Leaders, 1986

"If you had a son or daughter who was required to become fluent in a foreign language, which one of the following would you advise him or her to choose?"

Foreign Language Chosen	
Spanish	34%
French	22
Japanese	16
Chinese	12
Russian	10
German	3
Don't know	4

ATTITUDES TOWARD COVERT INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY

Before the controversy erupted over covert activity by members of the National Security Council staff in regard to Iran and Nicaragua, a shift had already occurred in American public and leadership attitudes toward covert activity undertaken by the Central Intelligence Agency. In response to a key question–"In general, do you feel the CIA should or should not work secretly inside other countries to try to weaken or overthrow governments unfriendly to the U.S.?"–a large shift occurred among leaders and a smaller one among the public, all in the direction of greater support for the covert role of the Central Intelligence Agency. A 13-point swing occurred in leadership opinion; 48% (compared with 35% in 1982) said the United States should work secretly inside other countries, 45% (a 13% drop from 58% in 1982) said we should not. Among the public, 50% favored the CIA working secretly in other countries in 1986 (compared with 43% in 1982) and 38% were opposed (compared with 37% in 1982). Both the public and the leaders gave stronger support to the Reagan administration's priority of covert activities in certain parts of the world. Yet this support for a general enlargement of current activities does not translate into support for such efforts in specific countries–in Nicaragua, for example.

Not surprisingly, attitudes toward the role of the CIA vary substantially among different categories of the public. Looking more closely at the public sample, we found that those with a high political involvement in foreign affairs were more opposed to CIA involvement (50%) than the average American (38%). More of those Americans who believe that the United States plays a more important role in the world today favored CIA involvement (55%), while only 43% opposed it; among those Americans who believe the United States plays a less important role in the world today, only 43% favored an active role by the CIA and 49% opposed it. More Republicans (59%) favored an active role than Democrats (45%), and more Democrats were opposed to an active role (42%) than Republicans (31%).

We found no significant differences in response among income levels, but did find a substantial difference in the attitudes of men and women on this subject. Among men, 57% favored an active role by the CIA and 34% were opposed to it. Among women, 42% favored an active role by the CIA and 42% were opposed to it.

SENTIMENTS ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST

The study indicates an overall decline in the importance of the Middle East in shaping American thinking about foreign policy issues over the four-year period 1982-86. Also, some significant changes occurred in attitudes toward individual countries within the area. One example is Israel. After a sharp drop in favorability toward Israel from 1978 to 1982, largely because of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon during summer 1982, a substantial favorable shift occurred between 1982 and 1986. When asked the question "In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with Israel or more with the Arab nations?", 61% of Americans indicated their sympathies were more with Israel, an increase of 13% over 1982. Ten percent of those responding said that their sympathies were more in sympathy with the Arab nations, a drop of seven points from 1982 and a large percent (29%) said "don't know."

An almost identical shift occurred on the part of American leaders. Sixty-one percent said their sympathies were more with Israel (compared with 51% in 1982), and only 12% (compared with 19% in 1982) said their sympathies were more with the Arab nations. Yet at the same time that these trends favorable to Israel were under way, only 32% of the American public would favor the use of American military troops if Arab forces invaded Israel.

When a more specific question was asked in 1986 about President Reagan's plan for no further Israeli settlements on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and for a homeland for the Palestinians in these territories, a less pro-Israel response was given – one relatively unchanged from 1982. Among the public, 45% favored President Reagan's plan, 21% opposed it, and a substantial 34% indicated "don't know."

The pattern of the response to these specific questions confirms a strong continued favorable attitude by the American public and its leaders toward Israel, substantially more favorable than four years ago. The reasons for this, no doubt, include the fading from memory of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon by Israel and the relative decline in the importance of oil from the Arab countries in the Middle East. Likewise the increasing concern with terrorism which has been identified with the Middle East has strengthened favorable attitudes toward Israel. Follow-up sampling of opinion in mid-January 1987 after the Iran crisis revealed diminished support for military aid and arms sales to Israel.

IV. U.S. Economic Involvement

The end of the inflation and recession crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s have had a striking effect on the thinking of the American people concerning the domestic economy and foreign relations. As indicated earlier, the proportion of Americans who saw domestic economic issues – and especially unemployment – as the dominant problem facing the country has declined precipitously; in 1986 those who were mainly concerned about unemployment were matched in number by those who were mainly concerned about drug abuse and war/peace issues. Similarly, while a majority of Americans continued to view foreign economic policy through lenses of self-interest, the degree to which Americans perceived the interdependence of the U.S. economy and foreign policy has substantially declined since 1982.

FOCUS ON THE U.S. ECONOMY

When asked about a series of foreign – domestic connections, a majority of Americans continued to see foreign policy as having a major impact on the U.S. economy generally, on gasoline prices, on the value of the dollar abroad, and on unemployment at home (see Table IV-1). What is striking, however, is the sharp drop over the four years in the percentage of the population who see these links – a drop of between 10% and 13%. In 1982 we drew particular attention to the increase in the perceived link between foreign policy and domestic unemployment, a link we presumed to work through export markets for American goods and foreign competition for the U.S. market. While that competition continues more or less unabated, 10% *fewer* Americans see a major impact of foreign policy upon domestic unemployment. We have to conclude that this drop reflects the declining salience of

Table IV-1. Impact of foreign policy on the U.S. economy

"How important an impact do you think U.S. foreign policy has on the following: a major impact, a minor impact, or no impact at all?"

	1986		1982		1978		1974	Change in % points 1982-86	
	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public*	Public	Leaders
Our overall economy at home Major impact	62%	68%	72%	78%	72%	83%	76%	−10	−10
Gasoline prices at home Major impact	**69**	**49**	**81**	**61**	**85**	**77**	**87**	**−12**	**−12**
The value of the dollar abroad Major impact	62	67	72	60	82	76	78	−10	+7
Unemployment at home Major impact	**56**	**50**	**66**	**48**	**51**	**41**	**60**	**−10**	**+2**
Food prices at home Major impact	47	27	60	38	64	39	76	−13	−11

*No data for leaders for 1974.

Table IV-2. Tariffs and trade restrictions

"It has been argued that if all countries would eliminate their tariffs and restrictions on imported goods, the costs of goods would go down for everyone. Others have said that such tariffs and restrictions are necessary to protect certain manufacturing jobs in certain industries from the competition of less expensive imports ... Generally, would you say you sympathize more with those who want to eliminate tariffs or those who think such tariffs are necessary?"

	1986		1982		1978	
	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders
Eliminate tariffs	28%	66%	22%	67%	22%	75%
Tariffs are necessary	**53**	**29**	**57**	**28**	**57**	**23**
Don't know	19	5	21	5	21	2

unemployment, rather than a concern about the state of international markets.

There is other evidence in this survey of the possibly diminished degree to which people define their main foreign policy objectives in terms of these foreign-domestic connections. Protecting the jobs of American workers continued to be seen as a very important goal of foreign policy by more Americans (78%) than cited other leading goals; but the goal of arms control now matches the securing of adequate supplies of energy (69% each), and combatting world hunger (63%) matches reducing our trade deficit (62%), a new goal on the list.

Despite the oil glut of 1986, concern about *energy supplies* remained high. Saudi Arabia, with its abundant oil reserves, is still perceived as one of the top five countries of vital interest to the U.S. – tied in the public's perception with West Germany and Japan. While the proportion of Americans who thought it would be a "great threat" to the U.S. if Communists came to power in Saudi Arabia through peaceful elections declined from 49% to 39% since the last survey, those who still felt that way outnumbered those with a comparable concern about France (30%) or El Salvador (27%). And despite a strong distaste for military involvement, more than a third of the public (36%) favored the use of troops if "the Arabs cut off all oil shipments to the U.S." Twenty-six percent of the public would even send troops in the event of an invasion of Saudi Arabia by Iran.

The blurring of the focus on the U.S. economy is also evident in a measurable decline in support for protectionist measures (despite the importance attached to reducing our trade deficit) and in slightly increased support for economic aid to other nations.

TARIFFS AND TRADE

In view of the apparent increase in support for protectionism in political circles in the U.S., the movement on this issue in the two samples is of special interest. The leadership sample continued to express strong support for free trade, long a keystone of internationalist attitudes. Two-thirds – practically the same as four years ago – favored all countries' eliminating their tariffs and other restrictions on imported goods, and only 29% called tariffs necessary (see Table IV-2). The businessmen in this sample endorsed the elimination of tariffs by 71%, whereas labor leaders were the most protectionist, with 76% believing that tariffs are necessary.

Among the general public, sentiment continues to be the reverse of the leaders: 53% thought tariffs and trade restrictions necessary, and 28% favored eliminating them. These figures confirm the general level of public support for tariffs that has been found in national surveys for the past decade. But a closer look suggests something else as well: the gap between the public's views on this issue and the leadership views is closing, as the public keeps moving toward the "free trade" position of the leadership group. The gap between the people in the two samples who favor eliminating tariffs has narrowed by 15 percentage points over the 8-year period, while the gap between those in the two samples who believe tariffs are necessary closed by 10 percentage points.

It must be acknowledged that the gap remains large; but that should not obscure the significance of the movement that is narrowing it. While this movement may appear to be in line with the overall decline in concern about economic issues since the last survey, the shift was taking place even while concern for economic issues was still very high – and it continued even as the political leadership in the country appeared to be *increasingly* responsive to protectionist sentiment. Oddly enough, however, the college educated portion of the public, which has traditionally been in favor of trade liberalization, was more likely than groups with lesser education to believe that tariffs are necessary.

There continue to be few strategic reasons to explain the degree of protection that is favored by the general public. In 1982, 57% of the sample were opposed to an embargo on grain sales to the Soviet Union. In 1986, 57% were in favor of expanding grain sales to the Soviets. (The question was asked differently, because the grain embargo had faded as a policy issue.) The proportion of the public who favor restrictions on U.S. – Soviet trade has declined since 1982, from 47% to 37%, while those who would limit the sale of advanced U.S. computers to the Soviets is barely down, from 59% to 57%.

The sample of leaders overwhelmingly favors expanding grain sales to the Soviets (82%), and they oppose restricting Soviet trade generally (73%), although they continue to favor limiting the sale of computers (78%). There has been little change on these issues since the 1982 survey.

ECONOMIC AID

There is no great support among the American people for the principle of foreign aid. Most Americans (63%) consider "combatting world hunger" a very important foreign policy goal; such humanitarian feelings are evident in many surveys, which invariably show generous public responses to earthquakes, floods, famines, and other natural disasters abroad. Yet Americans as a whole put much less emphasis on the more far-reaching and difficult goal of improving the standard

Table IV-3. Economic aid to other nations

"On the whole, do you favor or oppose our giving economic aid to other nations for purposes of economic development and technical assistance?"

	1986		1982		1978		1974
	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public
In favor	53%	91%	50%	94%	46%	90%	52%
"I am going to read a list of present federal government programs. For each, I'd like you to tell me whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back or keep about the same."							
In favor of expanding economic aid	11	n.a.*	8	n.a.	11	n.a.	10
In favor of keeping economic aid the same	35	n.a.	31	n.a.	31	n.a.	28
"Some people say that this country should give economic and military aid to rebel groups fighting their communist-supported governments within countries like Nicaragua, Angola and Afghanistan. Which of these statements ... comes closest to your views?"							
In favor of giving economic and military aid	22	46	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
In favor of giving economic but not military aid	27	22	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
In favor of giving no aid	42	20	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Think that helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations is a very important foreign policy goal for the U.S.	37	46	35	55	35	64	39
Think that combatting world hunger is a very important foreign policy goal for the U.S.	63	61	58	64	59	67	61
"Now I'm going to ask you some questions about how the U.S. should handle the problem of illegal drugs like heroin and cocaine coming into the U.S. from other countries ... Should the U.S. give other countries foreign aid to help their farmers grow different crops and not depend on illegal drugs for their income?"							
In favor	60	79	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
"A number of developing countries, such as Mexico and Brazil, owe large amounts of money to American banks. If these countries were unable to repay these loans, some U.S. banks would be in trouble. Would you favor or oppose U.S. government guaranteeing repayment of these loans?"							
In favor	31	27	n.a.	38	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

*n.a. = not asked

of living in less developed nations: since 1978 little more than one-third have considered that a very important goal. Third World countries are less likely than others to be seen as being of a vital interest to the U.S., and their thermometer ratings tend to be lower as well. (See Chapter III.)

This ambivalence between humanitarian and political goals is more clear when the issue involves spending money. A bare majority of Americans (53%) favored our giving economic aid to other nations for purposes of economic development and technical assistance—a small but steady increase since 1978 (see Table IV-3). But in the context of a varied list of government programs, more people (48%) wanted to *cut back* on spending for economic assistance than wanted to keep such spending at the same (35%) or higher (11%) level. On the other hand, there has been a substantial drop in the number of people who have spontaneously mentioned the need to reduce foreign aid as one of the "biggest foreign policy problems" facing the U.S. (from 18% in 1978 to 16% in 1982 and to 9% in 1986).

Advocates of economic aid among the public were concentrated in the groups most traditionally associated with internationalism: the college educated (68% in favor), those who are most attentive to foreign news (62% in favor), people in business and professional occupations (65% in favor), and those who have traveled abroad (59% in favor).

We have noted in prior years that opposition to foreign aid, whether or not it reflects motives of economic self-interest, cuts a wide and deep swath in American society. Reluctance to give such aid does not flow simply from adverse economic conditions; resistance to aid has persisted practically throughout the decades in which polls have been taken, except in times of war. Questions that were asked in prior surveys but which were not asked in 1986 make it clear that resistance to foreign aid rests heavily on a pervasive skepticism about what aid can actually accomplish abroad, and about what it does for us at home.

Further clues to the motives (and the fears) of Americans with respect to aid are contained in questions that were new to the survey in 1986 (see Table IV-3). A good majority (60%) of the public was supportive of foreign aid if it would help farmers in

Table IV-4. Responses to the situation in South Africa

"Which of these statements ... comes closest to your view of how the United States should respond to the situation in South Africa?"

	1986	
	Public	Leaders
We should support the South African government	8%	3%
We should take no position	23	14
We should impose limited economic sanctions if the South African government does not dismantle its apartheid system.	28	46
We should ban all trade with or investment in South Africa if the South African government does not dismantle its apartheid system.	29	33
Don't know	12	4

such countries to stop growing illegal drugs and to grow different crops instead. On the other hand, there is no comparable level of support for economic, or economic *and* military, aid to rebel groups who are fighting their communist-supported governments within countries like Nicaragua, Angola, and Afghanistan. Despite the centrality of such aid to the Reagan administration, those who support either economic or military aid to such rebel groups (49%) do not greatly outnumber those who favor giving no aid at all to such groups (42%).

The foreign policy leadership sample continues to favor economic aid for the general purpose of economic development by a lopsided majority: since 1978 over 90% of this group have indicated their support. But on other dimensions of the aid question, a major and negative change appears to have been under way in leadership attitudes. The proportion of leaders who endorse, as a very important foreign policy goal for the U.S., "helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations" has dropped below 50% for the first time in these Council surveys. In 1978, 64% of the sample of leaders endorsed this goal; in 1982, 55%; and in 1986, only 46% (see Table IV-3). There is a smaller but comparable progression that is visible in the decline of leadership support for "combatting world hunger" as a very important foreign policy goal (from 67% in 1978 to 61% in 1986).

There has also been a decline of 11% in leadership support over the four years for the U.S. government's guaranteeing the repayment of developing-country loans to American banks; in 1986 there was more support for that proposition among the general public than in the leadership group. On the two new "aid" questions in this survey, however, the leaders took a more pro-aid position than the general public; a large majority of the leaders (79%) support foreign aid to help farmers shift from drug crops to other crops, and 46% supported economic and military aid (22% economic only) to rebel groups fighting their communist-supported governments. Prior to the Iran-contra affair, at least, close to a majority of the leadership group was on the side of the Reagan administration on this aspect of the Nicaraguan issue.

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

In view of the changes taking place in South Africa, and the debate in the United States on appropriate policy toward that country, we asked both the public and the leaders how they thought the U.S. should respond to the situation in South Africa. The results are given in Table IV-4.

Clearly, there is no significant support whatever for the South African government among either group (although what small support there is *increases* as educational levels *decrease*). There was virtually identical support among the public for limited economic sanctions – President Reagan's policy – and for more extreme economic measures if the apartheid system is not dismantled. The leaders, however, were more supportive of the President's position on limited sanctions. If we combine support for the two types of economic pressures, we find that 57% of the public, and 79% of the leadership group, favored economic sanctions of some sort to help end apartheid in South Africa.

AID FOR MILITARY PURPOSES

The public has little sympathy for military assistance to other countries. Only one-third of the respondents favored giving military aid, and 37% supported the government's selling military equipment to others (see Table IV-5). These proportions have been in the same range since 1978. One finds in these figures some indication of why the Reagan administration's actions regarding Iran are so unpopular, for the administration sold military equipment to one country (and an unpopular country at that) and then may have used some of the proceeds to *give* military assistance to another. The leaders, on the other hand, who have always been in favor of both giving and selling military equipment, were substantially more supportive of giving military aid to other nations in 1986 than in earlier surveys (up 14% since 1982, from 59% to 73%).

When asked how they felt about expanding, cutting back, or maintaining the level of expenditure on a series of government programs, almost no one wanted to expand military aid to other nations. One-third (27%) of the public favored maintaining the current levels of military assistance and two-thirds (62%) decreasing it. There has been no important change in these figures since 1978, despite the increase in the level of military investment and assistance by the Reagan administration since 1981.

This aversion to military assistance is sustained for specific aid proposals. Nearly three-quarters of the public (72%) felt that U.S. military aid to Central America is likely to lead to U.S. military involvement in that area – a sentiment shared by only 50% of the leadership sample. Similarly, 70% of the public favored either giving no aid or economic aid only but no mili-

Table IV-5. Military aid and arms sales

	Jan. 1987	1986		1982		1978		1974
	Public	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public
"I am going to read a list of present federal government programs. For each, I'd like you to tell me whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same."								
In favor of expanding military aid to other nations	n.a.*	4%	n.a.	5%	n.a.	5%	n.a.	3%
In favor of keeping military aid the same	n.a.	27	n.a.	22	n.a.	21	n.a.	20
In favor of cutting back military aid to other nations	n.a.	62	n.a.	65	n.a.	64	n.a.	70
"On the whole, do you favor or oppose our giving military aid to other nations? By military aid I mean arms and equipment, but not troops."								
In favor	**33**	**33**	**73**	**28**	**59**	**29**	**60**	**22**
"On the whole, do you favor or oppose our government selling military equipment to other nations?"								
In favor	29	37	n.a.	39	68	33	67	35
"Do you feel that U.S. military aid to Central America is likely to lead to U.S. military involvement in that area?"								
% answering yes	**n.a.**	**72**	**50**	**n.a.**	**n.a.**	**n.a.**	**n.a.**	**n.a.**
"Do you think that U.S. military aid and arms sales to Israel should be increased, decreased, stopped altogether or kept about the same."								
Increased	8	10	5	9	5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Decreased	16	10	20	17	22	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Stopped altogether	25	11	2	16	3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Kept about the same	42	57	71	47	66	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Don't know	9	12	2	11	4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

*n.a. = not asked

tary aid to rebel groups fighting their Communist-supported governments in places like Nicaragua (see Table IV-3). And only one out of ten Americans thought that military aid and arms sales to Israel ought to be increased. In the four years 1982-86, however, the proportion of those who want to see such aid decreased or stopped altogether declined, from 33% to 21%, while those who want to see it kept at the same level increased 10%, reaching 57%. The leaders were more in favor of maintaining present levels of military aid to Israel than the general public, and were even less inclined than they to see it increased. The January 1987 poll, however, revealed a drop in public support for military aid to Israel.

SUMMARY

In sum, the Reagan Doctrine finds little support among the American people. A traditional lack of enthusiasm for economic aid, a positive dislike for military aid, and a substantial concern that the latter will only get us militarily involved in Central America add up to a limited support for the President's policy. Further, the notion of "interdependence" between our domestic economy and our foreign policy took something of a beating in the period 1982-86 as the American people gave diminished priority to economic issues in general.

V. U.S. Military Involvement

ATTITUDES ON DEFENSE SPENDING

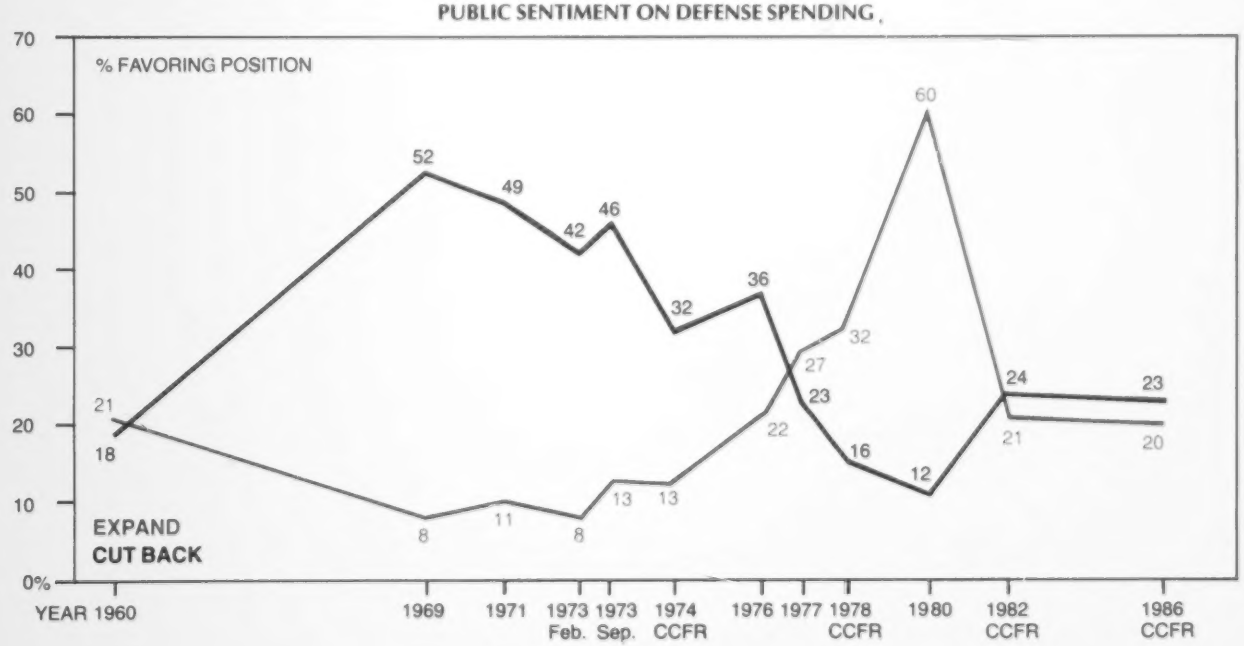
One of the most important shifts in public attitude has been over levels of defense spending. Since the early 1980s, there has been a clear movement away from previous substantial support for increased spending in this area. This represents a significant reversal of the trend of the later 1970s. During the period 1974 to 1978, there was a 19% shift in favor of increased defense spending, from 13% to 32%, and a related decline in those who favored cutting back on defense, from 32% to 16%. Other polls indicated that the two years following the 1978 Council survey witnessed an even stronger surge in support for accelerated defense spending. A majority of the public held this view in 1980-81, then shifted back to support for the status quo.

In the years 1982 to 1986, public opinion became more stable on this issue. There has been no detectable shift back toward support for the expansion of defense spending along the lines consistently advocated by the Reagan administration. On the other hand, opposition to defense also has not increased; there is only limited support for cutting defense spending. Rather, there has been very slight movement from both the "expand" and "cutback" categories toward support for keeping the status quo. Between 1982 and 1986, those who opted for "keep same" level went from 52% to 54%. The decline in support for increasing defense spending is demonstrated in Figure V-1.

Leadership opinion appears to have moved in the same direction, but with more support for cutting spending. In 1986, only 12% of this group wanted to increase defense spending, compared with 20% in 1982 and 31% in 1978; and 37% wanted to cut back, compared with 41% in 1982 and 28% 1978. As with the general public, sentiment on both sides moved toward the middle, with a 12% expansion, from 36% to 48%, of those who wished to "keep the same" levels of defens spending.

In 1986 as in earlier surveys, attitudes toward defense spending were measured in two ways. First, respondents were asked whether a series of present federal government programs should be "expanded, cut back, or kept about the same." In this context, defense spending was being compared with various domestic programs, including such popular ones as aid to education and Social Security. When queried in this way, 22% of the public favored expanding defense spending and 34% wanted to cut back, compared with 24% and 34% respectively in these categories in 1982. A total of 39% of the public wanted to keep defense spending at current levels, compared with 36% in 1982.

FIGURE V-1
PUBLIC SENTIMENT ON DEFENSE SPENDING



Second, the defense spending question was asked separately, with no implied trade-offs involved. As in earlier surveys in this series, defense spending was less popular in the context of implied trade-offs against other government programs. The trends concerning both questions are nevertheless the same over time: Council polls after 1978 showed a drop in support for increasing, a gain in support for cutting back, and a gain in support for maintaining the status quo concerning levels of defense spending.

Figure V-1 provides long-term trend indications concerning public attitudes on this issue. With the passage of time, the peak in the early 1980s measured by Council and other surveys in support for defense spending stands out with increasing clarity. This shift toward more defense spending was greater than the previous one in this direction measured by Gallup, in the late 1950s, and is the most significant such shift on this subject found by the organization in polls going back to the late 1940s. Despite the movement away from the 1978 level, public opinion is still comparatively sympathetic to defense spending. Support for cutting back defense is somewhat greater than was the case in 1960, but about the same proportions want to expand now as in that year, and this percentage is higher than has been the case in most intervening years.

In contrast to earlier years, attentiveness to news and belief that the Soviet Union is stronger than the United States do not correlate strongly with attitudes on defense spending. In 1978 there was a strong relationship between each of these categories and defense spending–the more attentive public, and those who felt the Soviet Union was clearly superior to the United States, were much more positive about defense. Moreover, at that time there were far more people who believed that the Soviet Union was superior to the United States. In the intervening period there has been clear movement of opinion toward the view that the two superpowers are about equal in military capabilities. No doubt this is one important factor in the waning of support for greater defense spending. In 1982 there was much less difference between the attentive public and the rest, and this carried through in the 1986 survey as well. Among those highly attentive to foreign news, 22% wanted to expand defense spending, while 19% of those low on the attentiveness scale wanted to do so. Concerning the strength of the Soviet Union, the association between the view that the Soviet Union is stronger and support for greater defense spending apparent in 1982 had declined by 1986. (See Table V-1.)

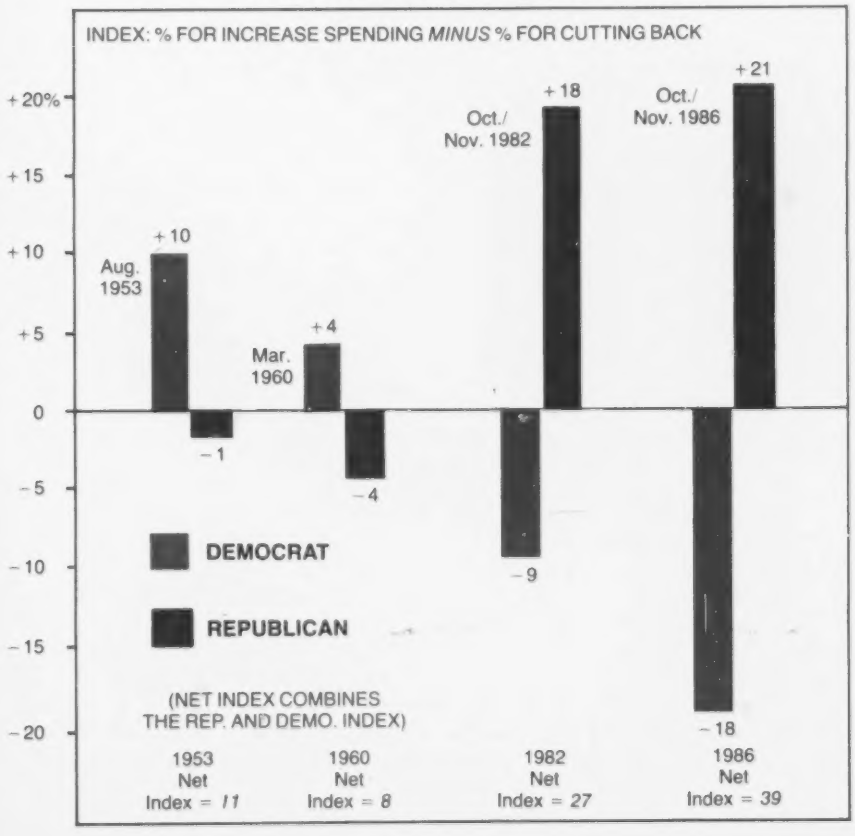
As this implies, decline in net advocacy of defense spending has been paralleled by a change in the perception of the military balance between the two superpowers. From the previous survey to the 1986 one, there was a decline of 12 points in the percentage of people who believe that the Soviet Union is stronger than the United States, from 29% to 17%, and an increase of 7 points in the proportion who believe that the United States is stronger, from 21% to 28%. While a plurality of 48% believe that the two superpowers are about equal, for the first time there is a significantly greater number of people who see the United States as the stronger superpower.

Among the leaders, there is a stronger tendency to see the two nations as being on a par in military terms, and also a more strongly held perception that the United States has the edge. The proportion viewing the U.S. as stronger (28%) is two and one-half times as large as that which sees the Soviets as stronger (11%). The large majority of the leaders who believe that the two superpowers are approximately equal in power should be kept in mind in analyzing a wide range of foreign policy responses. Concern about the federal deficit is probably another factor affecting the views in defense spending, especially among leaders.

As noted elsewhere in this report, advocates of increased defense spending join others in supporting cooperative ventures with the Soviet Union. These include arms control agreements as well as civilian endeavors. (See Table V-2.)

Partisanship plays a significant role in opinion on defense. This perhaps reflects the clearcut views of President Reagan on this subject, and is almost certainly influenced by the increasingly consistent attitudes within, and sharp differences between, American political parties on defense issues. A total of 29% of the Republicans but only 14% of the Democrats were in favor of expanding defense spending; 32% of the Democrats but only 8% of the Republicans were in favor of cutting back.

FIGURE V-2
SUPPORT FOR DEFENSE SPENDING
BY PARTY: EISENHOWER AND REAGAN YEARS



Over the years there has been a strong long-term correlation between partisanship and defense spending, but not always in the same direction. Party sentiments on defense spending measured by the Gallup organization during the Eisenhower administration, another period when a Republican president held strong public views on military spending, was the reverse of the present: the Democrats advocated greater spending, the Republicans wanted less. (See Figure V-2.)

In recent years the association between party and defense views has become even stronger. Subtracting the percentage in a party advocating cutting back from the percentage advocating expansion yields a useful index number (e.g., 29% Republicans for expanding minus the 8% Republicans for cutting back results in a +21% Republican index). By this index, the gap between the parties has expanded even as defense spending has tended to increase more slowly. In 1982 the gap between the parties was 27% (+18% Republicans and −9% Democrats); in 1986, the gap had grown to 39% (+21% Republican and −18% Democrats). The principal change over the years 1982-86 was the striking increase in the number of Democrats who want to cut back on defense.

Table V-1. Sentiments on defense spending by view of Soviet power 1982 and 1986

Defense:	Stronger Military Power:					
	United States			Soviet Union		
	Leaders	Public		Leaders	Public	
	1986	1986	1982	1986	1986	1982
Expand	5%	23%	20%	34%	31%	37%
Keep same	46	55	54	55	53	48
Cut back	49	22	26	11	16	15

Table V-2. Defense spending and U.S.-Soviet cooperation, 1986

Policies toward Soviets:	Percent favoring policy among those who want to expand defense: Public	Leaders
1. Favor arms agreements	82%	84%
2. Resume cultural and educational exchanges	76	95
3. Increase/expand grain sales	53	70
4. Favor scientific exchange	50	66
5. Oppose trade restrictions	47	53
6. Share technical information on missile defense	22	n.a.
7. Favor joint efforts to solve energy problems	n.a.*	60
8. Limit sale of advanced U.S. computers	64	85

*n.a. = not asked

FIGURE V-3: LEADERS - 1986 DEFENSE SPENDING

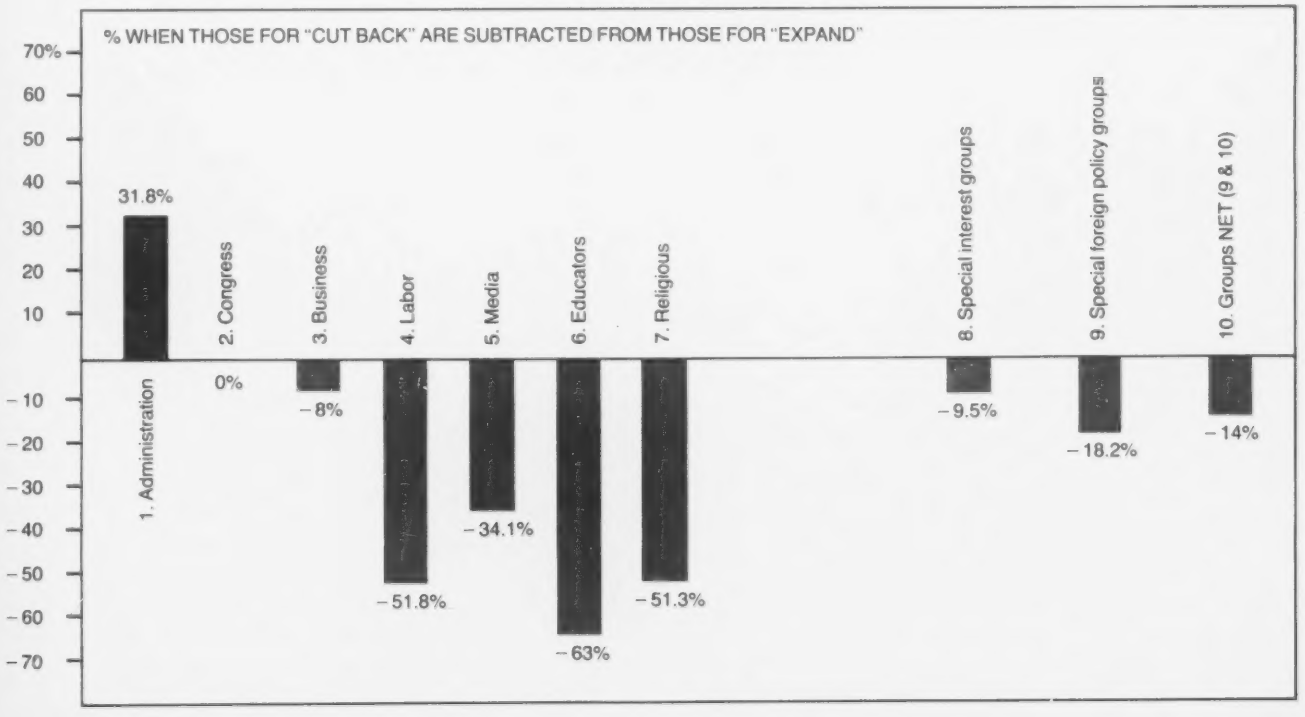


Table V-3. Attitudes on use of U.S. troops overseas: 1986

Situation:	U.S. Response: Favor Sending Troops		Oppose Sending Troops		Don't Know	
	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders
1. Soviets invade Western Europe	68%	93%	24%	5%	8%	2%
2. Soviets invade Japan	53	82	36	12	11	6
3. Nicaragua allows Soviets to set up missile base	45	67	42	27	13	6
4. Arabs cut off oil to U.S.	36	n.a.*	51	n.a.	13	n.a.
5. Arabs invade Israel	33	57	54	38	14	5
6. Soviets invade China	27	14	61	78	12	8
7. Iran invades Saudi Arabia	26	n.a.	59	n.a.	15	n.a.
8. El Salvador government losing to Leftist rebels	25	n.a.	56	n.a.	19	n.a.
9. Nicaragua invades Honduras to destroy Contra bases	24	17	60	74	17	9
10. North Korea invades South Korea	24	64	64	32	12	4
11. China invades Taiwan	19	n.a.	64	n.a.	17	n.a.

*n.a. = not asked

Finally, both education and declared position on the liberal–conservative political spectrum had a bearing on attitudes about defense spending. The more formal education, the less the support for increasing defense spending and the greater support for cutting back. As party sentiments imply, self-described conservatives are more in favor of defense spending than self-described liberals. Among the leaders, union and religious representatives and educators were particularly anxious to cut back defense spending. However, virtually no other category of leaders reflected the administration's strong sentiments for increased defense spending. (See Figure V-3.)

Both public and leaders are clearly supportive of research on, though not necessarily deployment of, the Strategic Defense Initiative – the so-called "Star Wars" program. A total of 48% of the public and 66% of the leaders support research but no decision on deployment at this time. Only 14% of each group would abandon the effort, while 28% of the public and 20% of the leaders favor building the system.

INTERVENTION

In 1986 Americans were somewhat more willing to use troops overseas in selected circumstances, reflecting perhaps a waning of the influence of the Vietnam experience. At the same time, the public is still considerably more reluctant than the leaders to use troops. A clear majority of the public sample favors commitment of American troops to combat only in the event of a direct Soviet invasion of Western Europe or Japan. Leaders are much more willing to consider using troops in other circumstances, including a Soviet invasion of South Korea or a cutoff of oil supplies. Among the public, 68% were willing to use troops if the Soviets invade Western Europe and 53% if they invade Japan. Slightly under half (45%) of the public and two-thirds of the leaders would commit troops if the Nicaraguan government permitted the Soviet Union to build a missile base on their territory (45% in favor, 42% opposed). In all other situations cited in the public sample, a clear majority was opposed to use of American troops.

Feelings appear to be the same concerning the Asian nations cited. A total of 64% of the public sample opposed use of troops if China were to invade Taiwan or if North Korea were to invade South Korea; 61% were opposed if the Soviet Union invaded the People's Republic of China. While the trend continued toward greater willingness to use U.S. troops in certain situations, notably to defend close allies in Europe and Japan, the public remains strongly opposed to becoming directly engaged in military action elsewhere (see Table V-3).

The even division of opinion concerning use of troops in the event the Soviets place a missile base in Nicaragua contrasts with the general reluctance to become involved in Central America. This situation roughly parallels the Soviet attempt to move offensive missiles surreptitiously into Cuba in 1962. It resulted in direct military confrontation between the two superpowers. At the time, U.S. public opinion was extremely supportive of President Kennedy's decision to impose a naval blockade around Cuba and his demand that the missiles be removed. Such a move today, with the size and diversity of the nuclear arsenals on both sides, would not shift the strategic balance. The sentiments expressed about Nicaragua are conflicting (see Table V-3).

People are generally opposed to using troops overseas, yet strategic concerns are important and the U.S. has strong historic involvement and influence in Latin America. In contrast to defense of Europe and Japan, a decisive majority is not for using force if the Soviets set up a missile base in Nicaragua. A plurality, however, did favor that course. But 60% of the public were opposed to using troops if Nicaragua invaded Honduras to destroy contra bases. The even division of opinion reflects the tension between aversion to use of troops and support for a national policy, dating back to the early 1960s, that offensive Soviet missiles in Central America or the Caribbean are unacceptable.

Leadership opinion is much more supportive of use of military force in selected

Table V-4. Willingness to use troops and Vietnam War attitudes
"The Vietnam War... fundamentally wrong and immoral."

Use Troops if:	Agree Strongly		Disagree Strongly	
	Public	Leaders	Public	Leaders
Soviets Invade Japan	50%	69%	68%	89%
Soviets Invade W. Europe	65	84	82	96
Soviet Missiles in Nicaragua	40	43	69	86
N. Korea Invades S. Korea	21	43	46	80
Rebels Winning in El Salvador	20	n.a.*	47	n.a.
Arabs Invade Israel	28	55	51	57

*n.a. = not asked

circumstances. As with the public, sentiment is strongest concerning defense of Western Europe and Japan. This is followed by strong support for using the military against a Soviet missile base in Nicaragua, by 67% to 27%. Leadership opinion is strongly in favor also of defending Israel against an Arab military invasion, by 57% to 38%. Leaders by a two-to-one majority would defend South Korea against North Korea, in contrast to the four-to-one majority against using troops in the event that the Soviet Union invaded China.

There is a further division between public and leaders on the question of the Reagan Doctrine, giving economic and military assistance to "rebel groups fighting their Communist-supported governments" in such countries as Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua. A total of 42% of the public were against any aid, while only 20% of the leaders felt that way. By contrast, 46% of the leaders, but only 22% of the public, favored giving both military and economic help to such rebels. This is consistent with responses to the more general question on foreign military aid–a clear majority of the public was opposed but three-quarters of the leaders were in favor.

In an effort to test willingness to intervene on the problems of terrorism and the drug traffic, the public and leaders were presented with the choices of negotiating with terrorist groups "to try to solve the problems they're concerned with," ordering the CIA to assassinate known terrorists, and using military force against terrorists or nations that harbor them. Majorities of 54% of the public and 68% of the leaders favored use of military force; but assassination was rejected by both the public–48% to 40%–and leaders –65% to 28%. Negotiation was opposed by 55% of the public and 74% of the leaders. Concerning drugs, large majorities of the public (82%) and of the leaders (81%) favor using military and civilian personnel to help foreign governments, and 60% and 79% respectively would aid farmers to move into different crops. However, direct use of military force was rejected by 67% of the public and 91% of the leaders. Use of force to stop the drug trade is the one topic polled for which women were as willing as men to use military force. On this question, 27% of both males and females surveyed said the U.S. should use force. By contrast, when asked about committing troops overseas in response to hypothetical events, men were consistently more willing to do so than women. For instance, 75% of men but 62% of women were willing to use troops if the Soviets invaded Western Europe; and respective figures were 63% and 44% if the Soviets invaded Japan, 52% and 39% if the Soviets placed missiles in Nicaragua, and 32% and 17% if North Korea invaded South Korea.

VIEWS ON VIETNAM

American attitudes concerning the Vietnam War remained generally negative. In the 1986 survey, as before, respondents were asked how they felt about the statement that the Vietnam War "was more than a mistake; it was fundamentally wrong and immoral." In 1986, 66% of the public concurred, compared with 72% in 1978 and 1982. A total of 27% disagreed "somewhat" or "strongly" with the statement, compared with 21% in 1982 and 19% in 1978. Among leaders, only 44% agreed with the statement, compared with 45% in 1982 and 50% in 1978. A total of 57% disagreed with the statement, compared with 54% in 1982 and 47% in 1978. We can infer some waning of the impact of the Vietnam experience with the passage of time. Majorities of the public, however, have consistently seen the war as a fundamentally misguided effort. Views on Vietnam clearly correlate with willingness to use troops overseas, as Table V-4 reveals.

NATO

Recent years have witnessed growing frictions between the United States and European allies, especially on trade and financial and fiscal matters. European criticism has extended to security questions as well. For example, there was strong opposition in Europe, especially in the Low Countries and among Socialist parties, to the deployment of 572 Cruise and Pershing II missiles under the 1979 NATO "two-track" decision. There has also been extensive political criticism of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative. Most European leaders were surprised by and disagreed with President Reagan's proposal at the Iceland summit to abolish all ballistic missiles, a proposal that if implemented could undermine the NATO security system of the past four decades. These difficulties, however, do not appear to have resulted in any movement on the part of U.S. opinion away from the NATO alliance or from commitment to the defense of Europe. When asked about maintaining, increasing, or decreasing the U.S. commitment to NATO, 62% of the public and 77% of the leaders wanted to continue the involvement at current levels.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, defense issues do not seem to provoke the same concerns apparent in earlier years. Both the public and leadership groups are more confident about the strength of the United States, measured by views on defense spending and also such matters as the role of the nation in the world. As noted in Chapter II, the majority was more confident than four years ago that the U.S. was playing a more important role. The shift has been even sharper among leaders, and people are more willing to use U.S. troops overseas in certain selected circumstances. Attitudes on defense spending, use of force, and national strength all have moved in a consistent direction in recent years.

VI. Foreign Policy Preference: Leaders, Public, and Administration

Public opinion plays an important part in democratic theory. To be sure, theorists disagree about what the public's role ought to be, especially when it comes to foreign policy. Some advocate populistic democracy, in which government policy responds directly to what a majority of citizens wants. Others argue that enlightened leadership ought to promote what it sees as the public interest, even if that means carrying out policies that are (at least in the short run) unpopular with the public. Still others emphasize the importance of leaders educating and informing ordinary citizens so that public opinion rests upon a solid foundation and the preferences of leaders and citizens do not conflict.

No position need be taken on these controversies in order to ascertain how leaders and the public actually perceive U.S. foreign policy. The Council's surveys, with their separate samples of public and leadership opinion, shed some light on certain aspects of these questions.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PUBLIC OPINION AND REAGAN ADMINISTRATION POLICIES

It is relevant to explore to what extent U.S. foreign policy corresponds to the wishes of the citizenry or the leaders. At various points in this report we have noted apparent discrepancies between current foreign policy and the preferences of the public. It is difficult to be precise about the extent of such discrepancies, but they are clearly frequent enough and important enough to establish that U.S. foreign policy does not proceed purely and simply on the basis of populistic democracy. For better or worse, the government does not always do what a majority of the public wants, nor does the public always approve of what the government does.

Discrepancies between government policy and the preferences of the public are not unique to the Reagan administration, of course. Under all administrations covering the years of the four Council surveys, the public gave a higher priority to domestic spending in which the public benefitted directly—whether it concerned support for education, housing, Social Security, or protecting jobs of American workers. On some foreign policy issues like foreign aid, the use of U.S. troops abroad, or tariffs, differences have existed under many different administrations, Republican and Democratic alike, reflecting the generally lower levels of foreign policy activism among the general public than among political and governmental leaders. On other issues in 1982 and 1986, and especially on Central America, arms control, and relations with the Soviet Union, the public clearly differed from the foreign policies pursued by the Reagan administration. (See the data summarized in Table VI-1. In the Table the percentages are recalculated, excluding

FIGURE VI-1. DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP GROUPS' RATINGS OF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION'S OVERALL FOREIGN POLICY - 1986

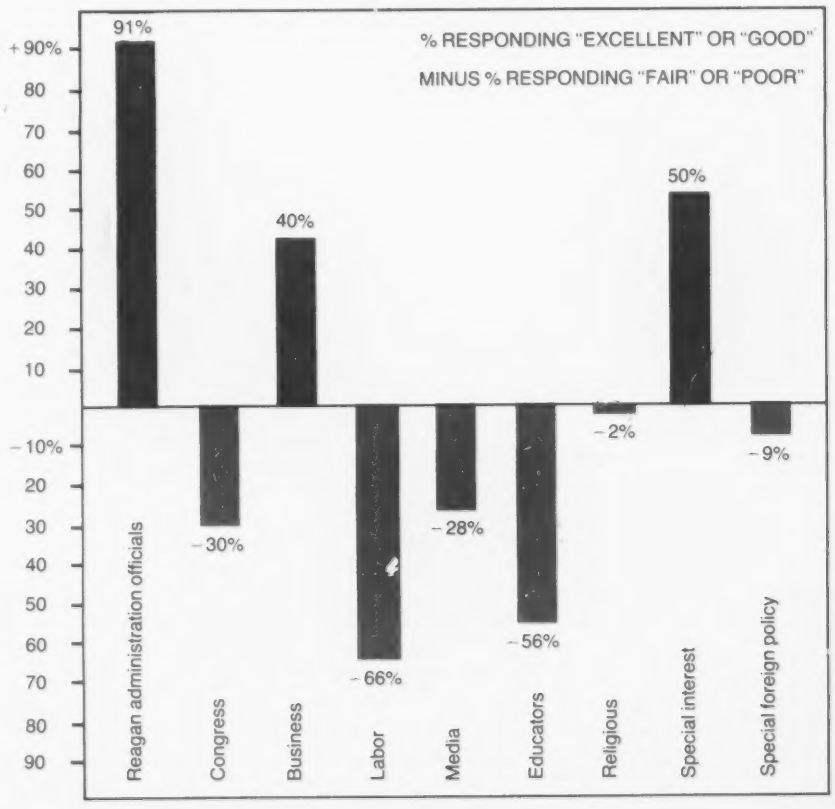


Table VI-1. Apparent disagreements betwen the public and the Reagan administration – 1986

(Proportion of the public giving each response. Percentages are recalculated, excluding "don't knows" from the base)			
Domestic Priorities			
Education spending			
Expand 71%	Keep the same 26%		Cut back 4%
Social Security spending			
Expand 62%	Keep the same 33%		Cut back 5%
Goal of protecting jobs of American workers			
Very important 79%	Somewhat important 18%		Not important 3%
Tariffs			
Eliminate tariffs 34%	Tariffs are necessary 66%		
Administration handling of trade			
Excellent or good 29%	Fair or poor 71%		
Administration handling of illegal immigration			
Excellent or good 20%	Fair or poor 80%		
Military Spending			
Defense spending (asked in context of domestic spending)			
Expand 23%	**Keep the same 41%**		**Cut back 35%**
Spending on national defense (asked later in questionnaire)			
Expand 21%	**Keep the same 56%**		**Cut back 23%**
Military strength			
U.S. stronger 30%	**About equal 52%**		**Soviet Union stronger 18%**
Arms Control			
Mutual verifiable nuclear freeze			
Favor right now, if Soviets agree 73%	Only after U.S. builds up nuclear weapons more 15%		Not at all 12%
Goal of wordlwide arms control			
Very important 71%	Somewhat important 23%		Not important 6%
Foreign Military Aid			
Giving military aid			
Favor 36%	**Oppose 64%**		
Selling arms and equipment			
Favor 41%	**Oppose 59%**		
Aid to rebels against Communist-supported governments			
Favor economic and military aid 24%	**Economic only 30%**		**None 46%**
Central America			
Administration's handling of Nicaragua			
Excellent or good 25%	Fair or poor 75%		
If Nicaragua invaded Honduras			
Favor using U.S. troops 29%	Oppose 71%		
Is military aid to Central America likely to lead to U.S. military involvement?			
Yes 80%	No 20%		
Administration handling of human rights			
Excellent or good 45%	Fair or poor 55%		
Terrorism			
Negotiate with terrorists			
Yes 41%	**No 59%**		
Administration's handling of terrorism			
Excellent or good 45%	**Fair or poor 55%**		
Middle East			
Military aid to Israel			
Increase 11%	Keep the same 64%	Decrease 12%	Stop 13%
Plan for Palestinian homeland on West Bank			
Favor 68%	Oppose 32%		
Administration's handling of the Middle East			
Excellent or good 44%	Fair or poor 56%		

"don't know" responses, in order to highlight the balance of opinion among members of the public with opinions.)

Once again the American public is much more eager than the administration in power to expand certain domestic social welfare programs than military spending. Large majorities in 1986 wanted to expand spending on education (71%, vs. only 4% for cutbacks) and on Social Security (62% vs. 5%). Similarly, the public again put a high priority on protecting the jobs of American workers as a foreign policy goal.

While the Reagan administration proposed to continue its military build-up, few members of the public (no more than 23%) wanted to expand military spending; more wanted to cut it back, and the preponderance of opinion favored keeping it about the same. Most Americans did not believe in a degree of Soviet military strength that would require a further U.S. build-up. Despite a decade of rhetoric about Soviet military superiority, only 18% saw the USSR as militarily stronger than the U.S., while 30% thought the U.S. was stronger and most considered the two nations about equal. That Americans were more skeptical of the Soviet superiority argument than they had been in 1982 can be seen partly as reflecting an accomplishment of the Reagan military build-up.

After the Reykjavik summit meeting, where President Reagan proposed drastic cutbacks in nuclear weapons, it became especially difficult to ascertain exactly what the administration's arms control policies were. In proposing the abolition of offensive ballistic missiles, the President undoubtedly appealed to the widespread public desire to reduce and possibly eliminate the deployment of thousands of nuclear-armed missiles. His proposal, which, if implemented, would discard the NATO defense system of the past 40 years, left the European allies dismayed—and left many American experts, government officials, and Congressional leaders equally skeptical. Nevertheless, the President's proposal had some public relations value and went far in the direction of meeting the public's long-held goal of worldwide arms control. The failure of the administration to achieve actual arms control agreements during its first six years left much of the public disappointed, according to the preferences reflected in our 1986 survey.

The Reagan Doctrine of supporting rebels against communist-supported governments like those in Nicaragua, Angola, and Afghanistan was favored by only a quarter of the population (24%). Many supported economic aid only, and nearly half opposed all such aid. Thus one of the cornerstones of Reagan administration policy in the Third World was opposed by most of the public. The public's opposition to military aid and covert action was most marked with respect to Central America. Nicaragua was specifically mentioned in our question about the Reagan Doctrine, which elicited little support. Moreover, three-quarters of the public gave unfavorable ratings to the administration's handling of Nicaragua, and even more (80%) thought military aid to Central America was likely to lead to U.S. military involvement. Few (29%) favored use of U.S. troops if Nicaragua invaded Honduras.

On the subject of terrorism the public's preferences corresponded closely to stated administration policies as of October 1986. Majorities favored using force against terrorist nations or groups even if innocent people might be killed (62%) and opposed negotiating with terrorists (59%). But that opposition to negotiations, together with the strong public distaste for Iran and for the Ayotollah Khomeini, came back to haunt President Reagan when it was revealed shortly after the autumn 1986 survey that the administration had in fact been negotiating with and selling arms to Iran. This particular discrepancy between public preferences and administration policy, compounded by the widely held perception that the policy had been misrepresented to the public, caused a decline in support for the Reagan administration's foreign policy.

Although sharp differences of view persist between the public and the administration, there are indications of movement by the Reagan administration in the direction of a more cooperative relationship with the Soviet Union, toward greater efforts on arms control, and toward slowing the rate of increase in military spending.

GAPS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND FOREIGN POLICY LEADERS

In addition to identifying differences between the public and the administration, it is useful to review the gaps between the policy preferences of the general public and those of our sample of leaders, and also to look at differences among the leaders themselves. Once again, we found many differences in policy preferences between the public and foreign policy leaders. (The largest gaps are displayed in Table VI-2. In order to compare the balance of opinion within the two groups, "don't know" responses, which are more numerous among the public, are excluded and the percentages recalculated.)

As we have noted before, there is a substantial (28%) gap in the proportions favoring an active part for the U.S. in world affairs. For decades, leaders have expressed more internationalist views than the public. The gap, however, is not enormous; and a majority of the public supports an active foreign policy.

The greater internationalism of leaders shows up in many specific areas of policy, notably in attitudes concerning military and economic foreign aid, free trade, various kinds of military intervention abroad, and cooperative relationships with the Soviet Union.

The general public is much more concerned than foreign policy leaders with domestic economic matters that affect the U.S. work force. Thirty-five percent more thought tariffs are necessary; and 35% more also considered the goal of protecting Americans' jobs to be very important. By the same token, the public is considerably less enthusiastic about spending money abroad. Despite the large majority endorsement of the goal of combatting world hunger, foreign economic aid was favored by many more (33%) of the leaders than of the public. (To be sure, a majority of the public having opinions did support economic aid.)

The public attributed more importance than did leaders to the goal of "containing communism," but were less inclined to see a threat if communist governments come to power in specific countries. The leaders gave a higher priority to the aim of defend-

Table VI-2. Gaps in policy preference between foreign policy leaders and the public – 1986

Public (% holding opinion)	("don't knows" excluded) Leaders (% holding opinion)	Gap (% leaders minus % public)
Involvement abroad		
Best to take an active part in world affairs		
71%	99%	+28
Domestic economy		
Tariffs are necessary		
66%	31%	−35
Goal of protecting Americans' jobs "very important"		
79%	44%	−35
Use of military force		
Favor using U.S. troops if:		
North Korea invaded S. Korea		
28%	67%	+39
USSR invaded Japan		
60%	87%	+27
Arabs invaded Israel		
38%	60%	+22
Vietnam war was not wrong or immoral		
29%	57%	+28
Foreign military aid		
Favor military aid to other nations		
36%	78%	+42
Favor military and economic aid to rebels against Communist-supported governments		
24%	52%	+28
Believe U.S. military aid to Central America is not likely to lead to U.S. military involvement		
20%	52%	+32
Foreign Economic aid		
Favor aid for economic development and technical assistance		
60%	93%	+33
United Nations		
Goal of strengthening UN "very important"		
49%	23%	−26
Relations with the Soviet Union		
Favor exchanging scientists		
59%	86%	+27
Drugs		
Favor use of military force without countries' permission		
29%	7%	−22

ing allies' security. In most concrete cases the public is substantially more reluctant than the leaders to use U.S. troops abroad. This is most notable with respect to a hypothetical invasion of South Korea by North Korea (39% fewer of the public than of leaders would use U.S. troops). But a similar gap appears in the cases of a Soviet invasion of Japan (28%); an Arab invasion of Israel (22%); a Soviet invasion of Europe (21%–though a large majority of the public still favored using U.S. troops); and a Soviet missile base in Nicaragua. In only two cases did the public express more willingness than leaders to use troops – a hypothetical invasions of China by the USSR or of Honduras by Nicaragua.

One large and important difference concerning the use of American troops was the public's much more pervasive belief (28%) that the Vietnam War was "fundamentally wrong and immoral," not just a mistake. Also considerably fewer of the public (28%) than of leaders favored Reagan Doctrine military aid to rebels fighting leftist governments in places like Nicaragua, Angola, and Afghanistan.

When it comes to foreign military aid, however, the public was far less supportive than leaders. The largest of all the gaps concerned military aid (42%). One cause of this reluctance to give military aid was undoubtedly the belief–held by 28% more of the public than the leaders–that military aid (to Central America) would tend to lead to U.S. military involvement. This is consistent with the public's opposition even to

Table VI-3. Major differences between opinions of administration officials and other leaders – 1986

Administration Officials*	Other Leaders*	Gap (% Administration minus % others)
Foreign policy role of Congress		
Congress is too strong		
77%	28%	+49
Domestic economy		
Tariffs should be eliminated		
100%	67%	+33
Arms Control		
Favor mutual nuclear freeze		
40%	82%	−43
Use of military force		
Goal of containing Communism "very important"		
86%	40%	+46
Vietnam war was wrong and immoral		
5%	45%	−40
Military spending		
Goal of matching Soviet power "very important"		
91%	56%	+35
Favor expanding spending on national defense (2nd question)		
43%	10%	+33
U.S. is militarily stronger than Soviet Union		
9%	30%	−21
Foreign military aid		
Favor military and economic aid to rebels against Communist-supported governments		
100%	48%	+52
Europe		
Europe more important than Asia		
27%	49%	−22
Would send son or daughter to Europe rather than Asia		
56%	76%	−20
The Middle East		
Sympathize more with Israel (than with Arab nations or "don't know")		
32%	63%	−31
Central America		
The U.S. efforts to overthrow the leftist government of Nicaragua were "excellent" or "good"		
70%	15%	+55
Human rights		
Goal of promoting democratic governments abroad "very important"		
55%	27%	+28
Agree that we must support some military dictators because they oppose Communists		
82%	60%	+22
Terrorism		
Favor negotiating with terrorists		
0%	23%	−23

selling weapons abroad. But the large gap that also existed with respect to economic aid suggests that unwillingness to spend money probably affected attitudes about military aid as well.

As so often in the past, the public (by 26%) remained more supportive of the United Nations than did leaders. Concerning relationships with the Soviet Union, more leaders than members of the public favored such measures as exchanging scientists, increasing grain sales, avoiding restrictions on trade, resuming cultural and educational exchanges, and negotiating arms control agreements. Only on the question of limiting the sale of advanced computers to the Soviets did leaders take a harder line than the public.

Two final policy areas, concerning international terrorism and the importation of drugs to the U.S., present a mixed pattern of gaps between public and leaders. Leaders were more opposed to negotiating with terrorists, and more in favor of using military force, but less eager to assassinate terrorists. Leaders were more favorable to aiding foreign farmers to grow non-drug crops, but less willing to use military force without other countries' permission. In both cases the leaders may have been more committed to strong action but more wary of the ideas of assassination or unauthorized military interventions in presumably friendly countries.

The causes of these various gaps is no doubt varied. Some differences are inherent in the very idea of a sample of national leaders. It is hardly surprising that people whose livelihood involves analyzing or managing foreign affairs or doing international business tend to favor an active U.S. role abroad. Their positions in society differ from those of the average American and their economic interest may vary. Workers more than leaders naturally worry about protecting Americans' jobs. Other differences may result from the leaders' possession of more information and more awareness of measures needed to protect the country's security and its economy.

We have used the term "leaders" as a shorthand way of referring to our sample of public officials and prominent private individuals active in the major professions, many of them with an international involvement. Over the course of our four surveys from 1974 to 1986 very similar patterns of gaps between the public and the leaders have appeared. There have been ups and downs on particular issues, but no general trend toward elimination of the gaps. While sharp influences emerge between leaders and the policies of any administration, generally leaders' views are more likely to be in accord with the government in power than are those of the public. But this is not always true.

And as we will discuss further, the Reagan administration can derive only limited satisfaction from this survey of leaders' opinions because the leaders differed on many major issues with the administration.

A different way of looking at our leadership sample is to think of it as representing people with direct influence upon policy making rather than upon the public. Of course, one cannot be sure about the extent of their influence. But if these leaders do exert influence on foreign policy, the preference gaps between leaders and public might be one reason why American foreign policy may systematically diverge over long periods of time from the preferences of the general public.

OPINION DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS AND OTHER LEADERS

We have observed that on a number of issues the policies of the Reagan administration did not seem to be in harmony with the views of our sample of leaders. One systematic way of getting at this point is to contrast the opinions expressed by administration officials in our survey with the opinions of the other leaders we surveyed, from Congress, business, labor, the media, education, religious organizations, special interest groups, and foreign policy organizations. (Table VI-3 shows the largest opinion gaps between administration officials and other leaders.) These officials were drawn from a broad range of agencies concerned with foreign political, economic, and military policy – not only the White House Office, the National Security Council, and the Departments of State and Defense, but also international offices in the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, and Treasury, the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of the United States Trade Representative, and other agencies. Although the sample is small there is no particular reason to think they are unrepresentative of Reagan administration foreign policy officials generally. Moreover, we have restricted Table VI-3 to cases of large opinion differences, on the order of 20 percentage points and more, in order to reduce the chance that differences result from chance characteristics of the particular officials sampled.

What is striking is the number of very large differences amounting to 30, 40, and even 50 percentage points. In many cases administration officials expressed quite different opinions from other leaders, sometimes concerning the overall direction policy should take. The non-administration leaders expressed more concern about the domestic economy and more receptiveness to protective tariffs than administration officials did. They also showed more enthusiasm for arms control, particularly for the idea of a mutual, verifiable nuclear freeze right away if the Soviets would agree to it. They were notably less committed than administration officials to the goal of containing communism, and more likely to condemn the Vietnam War as wrong and immoral.

The non-administration leaders were less committed to the goal of matching Soviet power, and less in favor of expanding spending on national defense. They offered less support to the Reagan Doctrine of giving military aid to rebels against communist-supported governments, though most favored at least giving economic aid. And they expressed more concern that military aid in Central America could lead to U.S. militlary involvement in that area. Concerning relations with the Soviet Union, non-administration leaders were consistently more likely to favor cooperative measures and to oppose restrictions. There are some indications that Reagan administration officials may be less Europe-centered than other leaders, somewhat more attuned to the Arab world (especially Saudi Arabia), and a bit less sympathetic to Israel.

The non-administration leaders' lack of enthusiasm for the Reagan Doctrine and their hesitation about the use of force abroad was particularly pointed with respect to Central America. A bare 15% of them, far fewer than the 70% of administration officials, rated U.S. efforts to overthrow the government of Nicaragua as "excellent" or "good"; the overwhelming majority called them "fair" or "poor."

Of course non-administration leaders also differed among themselves on many of these issues. Some groups of leaders tended to stand closer to the administration than others did. Businessmen and representatives of special interest groups were closest to administration officials on most issues; leaders from organized labor, the media, education, and religious organizations tended to be the farthest. Members of the 99th Congress, which was sitting at the time of the 1986 survey, were usually about average among the non-administration leaders, meaning that they had some very substantial differences from the administration.

These differences among groups of leaders are exemplified by their overall ratings of the administration's handling of foreign policy. Only 44% of non-administration leaders, in contrast to 96% of administration officials, rated the handling of overall foreign policy as "excellent" or "good"; most rated it "fair" or "poor." But leaders from different sectors reacted differently. Clearly administration officials rated themselves highly, with businessmen and special interest groups only a little behind. Labor officials were very negative, and educators, congressmen, and the media a bit less so.

The party affiliations and ideological orientations of leaders play a part in these differences. Labor leaders, for example, tend to be liberal Democrats, and it is not surprising that they often disagreed with a conservative Republican administration, whereas the business leaders were mostly Republican and conservative. But other leaders did not fit a simple pattern. Overall only 36% of the non-administration leaders described themselves as Democrats. Those from the media mostly described themselves as independents, but they were in broad disagreement with the administration officials.

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